

ELLIOTT O'DONNELL

Haunted



Waters

ELLIOTT O'DONNELL

BY ELLIOTT O'DONNELL

Haunted Britain
Ghosts with a Purpose
The Dead Riders
Dangerous Ghosts
Haunted People
Phantoms of the Night

Haunted Waters

ELLIOTT O'DONNELL



RIDER · LONDON

RIDER AND COMPANY

178-202 Great Portland Street, London, W.1



London Melbourne Sydney
Auckland Bombay Toronto
Johannesburg New York



First published 1957

© by Elliott O'Donnell 1957

*Set in eleven point Baskerville, two points
leaded, and printed in Great Britain
by The Anchor Press, Ltd.,
Tiptree, Essex*

CONTENTS

Introduction

Water has its own Spirits *page 7*

THE HAUNTED RIVERS AND LAKES OF ENGLAND

The Haunted Thames	11
The Stowaway	16
The Phantom Policeman	19
An Epping Forest Mystery	21
The Ghost of the Grinning Woman	24
A Sinister Severn Haunting	26
The Haunting of Dipdale Hole	31
The Strange Disappearance of John Harper, Cripple	36
The Mystery of Lydia Atley	40
The Riddle of the Skeleton	44
The Featureless Horror	48
Monks of Death	50
New Forest Hauntings	54
The Phantom Pond	57
Ghostly Horrors of the Dartmoor Rivers	59
A Norfolk Millpond Mystery	62
The Headless Woman of the Churnet	75
A Derbyshire Pretty Ghost	77
Seen in a Mirror	86
Some Yorkshire Water Hauntings	92
Ghost Lights of the Trent	94
The Phantom Riders	96

Ghosts of the Tyne	97
The Hauntings of Wearedale	100
The Haunted Eden	103
The Punt and the Haystack	106
Hauntings of the English Lakes	109
 THE HAUNTED RIVERS AND WATERS OF WALES	
The River of Ghostly Stealth	117
The Fifth Stepping-Stone	120
The Valley of the River of Death	122
 THE HAUNTED RIVERS AND WATERS OF SCOTLAND	
Some Scottish Loch Hauntings	131
The End of the Ravine	134
Some Scottish River Hauntings	138
 THE HAUNTED RIVERS AND WATERS OF IRELAND	
The Woman in Red	145
Stag-headed Men of Hate	152
Some Irish Lake Hauntings	156
A County Limerick Haunting	160
The Phantom Haze	166
 MISCELLANEOUS	
A Haunted Jamaican Lava Stream	171
Escaped from Justice	174
The Haunted River Morgue	177
The Figurehead on the Mast	190
The Mystery of the Blonde Women	191
The Hand on the Door	207
A Horrible Fate	213

INTRODUCTION

Water has its own Spirits

Primitive Man gazing at a rushing river, cataract, deep, still lake or pool, experienced, if he was at all impressionable, a feeling of awe such as, he reasoned, could only be produced by something more than the merely physical.

Hence he derived the notion that such waters harboured the types of spirits likely to cause such an impression. Calm sun-lit waters causing a more pleasing effect he came to regard as harbouring kinder and less repellant and forbidding spirits.

The brook leaping down the hillside, like a gambolling child, winding its sparkling way amid flowering meadows, created visions of gay and charming fairies.

Lakes, pools and rivers all had in the course of time their own peculiar species of spirits.

And this belief was probably the origin of water-worship. The poet who wrote about water relied on his imagination to describe it through the eyes of fancy. He knew full well that it was just water, something wholly physical; but to the mind of Early Man water acted not by laws of force, but by life and will. He believed that the rush and calmness of water, its cruelty and kindness, its power to work him weal or woe, to give him food or cramp and drown him was not due solely to the physical but to the superphysical, that all the actions of water were due to beings of another world, and to gain their goodwill he worshipped them; not satisfied with merely praying to them he offered them sacrifices of animals and human beings.

Though one may suppose that water-worship was a kind of special department of religion among the very early inhabitants of Great Britain, it does not follow that the water-worshippers

conceived a general deity presiding over fresh waters as an element.

They very likely had no paramount god, but merely worshipped the spirits that were peculiar to certain rivers and lakes.

Though water-worship has ceased for a long time in Great Britain belief in haunted rivers and lakes is even yet extant.

There is still a lingering credulity in Peg Powler, the English lorelei, that haunts the Tees and other North Country rivers; in water wraiths that haunt certain English lakes and pools; ghost lights that hover over Welsh waters prognosticating death; glaistigs that haunt Scottish streams; and ghosts of various kinds that haunt the lakes and rivers of Ireland.

Nixies, i.e. spirits that lure people to death by drowning, would seem to be ubiquitous; their favourite haunts appear to be fords and estuaries. They are apparently more common in Scotland than in England. Some streams are prophetic. They are alleged to disappear and to reappear, and to change their hue prior to an event of national importance.

Certain wells are reputed to have magical qualities. In Cornwall and in a few other counties of Great Britain there are holy-wells, into which people still drop pins, nails and rags, praying that their wishes may be granted. Should a quantity of bubbles rise it is regarded as a good omen.

It is possible that the hauntings of lakes and rivers are due in some cases to the close proximity of haunted trees and rocks. There may or may not be a close affinity between water-spirits and the spirits of trees and rocks.

All such spirits, water, trees or rocks, need not necessarily be Nature Spirits or what are termed Elementals, they may be sometimes the spirits of human beings and animals.

The animistic idea of rocks having specific spirits seems fantastic, but in the records of ghost-lore there are many instances of hauntings by what are thought to be inanimate objects, such as ships, trains, coaches, automobiles and aeroplanes. So why not rocks?

THE HAUNTED RIVERS AND LAKES OF ENGLAND

The Haunted Thames

IF tragedies are a cause of hauntings the Thames should assuredly be haunted, for no river in Great Britain has witnessed more murders and suicides. Is it not possible, however, that there is something in a river that induces tragedies? The old belief that certain seas, rivers, streams, lakes and pools harbour their own peculiar species of spirits may after all be true.

I have often felt when in near proximity to some rivers and pools as if the water possessed a strange, magnetic influence and attraction, as well as sensing the presence of a spirit, sometimes friendly and sometimes evil and inimical.

When I returned from ranching in the Far West of America I lived for a year in a small hotel in York Road, Lambeth, then a very sordid neighbourhood. I used frequently to stroll of an evening along the Thames Embankment. It was in the early nineties of the last century, and on nearly every seat were wretched down-and-outs, homeless and hopeless. When I could afford it I gave them a few coppers and chatted with some of them, as I did in the London parks and commons. Several of them told me that they had felt a ghostly presence urging them to end their miserable existence by jumping into the river.

And I thought of a picture in the 1860 Christmas number of the *Illustrated London News* that used to fascinate me when I was a boy. It was by Phiz, and represented a young man leaning over the wall of one of the London bridges and gazing into the Thames. He was in very great trouble. A hideous, evil spirit, that had apparently risen from the river, said: 'Come! It's the only way. Hasten! Save yourself!' and beckoned to him with a curved, shining finger. The young man felt impelled to take the fatal plunge, and would doubtless have done so but for the intervention of his guardian angel.

Some of the poor down-and-outs who chatted with me may have been saved, too, from a watery grave by the intervention of a guardian angel, but there were nightly those who, if they had a guardian angel, heeded it not and yielding to the urging of some demon of the Thames, leaped into the cold, watery depths.

The spot where Cleopatra's Needle stands was well known to be haunted. None of the outcasts would venture near it. Two of them told me that they saw one night a tall, nude, shadowy figure, with a peak-shaped head and a body covered with what looked like scales, suddenly appear by the Needle, wave a long arm at them and leap over the wall into the river. They said that they sometimes heard unearthly groans and hellish, mocking laughter in the river.

Old Westminster and Waterloo Bridges were well known to be haunted at times. Spectral figures were rumoured to be encountered on them in the dead of night and seen leaping from them into the Thames. Suicides from both those bridges were almost nightly occurrences in the early nineties, and more than once I narrowly missed witnessing them.

On the morning of October 9, 1857, a carpet-bag was discovered on one of the abutments of Waterloo Bridge. It contained the dismembered body of a man, who had been horribly murdered. The toll-keeper of the bridge recollected seeing a woman carrying a bag that closely resembled the one found, come to the bridge on the night of October 8 and pay toll-money. She spoke in a voice singularly gruff for a woman, and there was something very masculine about her.

No one except the toll-keeper had any evidence to offer. The identity of the murdered man was never known, and the crime was assigned to the category of unsolved mysteries.

Soon after the finding of the remains the bridge was rumoured to be haunted by the ghost of a headless man, who was habited like a sailor. He appeared several nights in succession just above the abutments where the remains had been found. It was thought to be the ghost of the murdered man whom the police believed was a foreign sailor.

Rumours of ghostly phenomena were current for a while in the summer of 1897 after the discovery of the body of a man, who had been strangled, in the Thames near Carron Wharf, Whitechapel. A postman told me that he and his wife had heard unearthly cries and groans in the river near the wharf, and had seen the figure of a man of huge stature rise from the water, wave his arms in the air and then disappear. They experienced these strange happenings on three succeeding nights.

Every few years stories are in circulation regarding the reappearances of the Richmond Cavalier's ghost. It is a phantom dressed like a Cavalier of the days of Charles I, which is seen during the late afternoon or evening prowling about the long avenue on the Surrey side of the Thames between Richmond and Twickenham. It appears very suddenly, seeming to rise out of the river, and disappears as suddenly and mysteriously. It is alleged to have been seen by several people, individually and collectively.

About the sixties of the last century there was an epidemic of demolishing old buildings in London, and among those that were destroyed, some very wantonly, were numbers two and three West Street. These two houses were very close to the Fleet River which flowed into the Thames near Blackfriars Bridge.

Built by an affluent gipsy, they served conjointly the purpose of a tavern and an inn, which became the resort of fences, robbers and every kind of criminal. There were sliding panels, secret staircases, cupboards for storing stolen goods, and trapdoors, which afforded a means of escape and of dropping bodies of victims into the Fleet, to be borne speedily by the current into the Thames.

Many cruel, dark deeds were perpetrated in the inn. Strangers in London were decoyed by attractive women, confederates of the robbers, to the inn, where they were robbed and murdered. Once within the walls of the inn there was no hope of escape and no mercy. It was small wonder that stories of ghostly happenings in the inn and in the Fleet were constantly circulated.

One night about the thirties of the last century a young

merchant was walking along West Street on his way home when he heard dreadful groans, and saw a woman crouching by the Fleet. He approached her and enquired if she was ill, whereupon she raised a slender white hand and pointed to her neck. There was a gory gaping wound in her throat. As he gazed at her, immeasurably shocked, a long, bare, fleshless arm rose out of the water and dragged her in the river.

Another story is about a clergyman, who was going home one night after visiting a sick parishioner when he heard blood-curdling cries coming from either number two or three West Street. Considerably startled, he was standing still wondering what he ought to do when the door of the house opened, and a man and woman emerged carrying a body. They passed close to the clergyman without seeming to notice him, and he was horrified to see the corpse was headless. Bereft of the power to move or utter a sound, he watched them pitch the body into the river. Directly they had done this they vanished, and the blood-curdling cries were repeated, coming this time from the river. The clergyman hurried home as fast as his legs could carry him.

Space will not permit me to relate in this volume anything like all the stories of Thames hauntings that I have been told and have collected from various sources. I am only able to mention two more.

One was told me in 1925 after the publication of my book, *The Trial of Kate Webster*, which was included in the Notable British Trials series.¹ After one of my talks on ghosts a lady told me that when she and a friend were crossing Barnes Bridge one night in 1879, soon after the execution of Kate Webster for the atrocious murder of Mrs. Thomas in Richmond, they both heard a loud splash and saw a woman in black leaning over the wall of the bridge, gazing down into the river. Her face was very pale, her features hard and her expression extremely forbidding. There was something very sinister about the woman. On them approaching her she vanished.

¹ William Hodge & Co. Ltd.

They told a policeman whom they met shortly afterwards about her, and he said: 'Oh, several people have told me they have seen the ghost of Kate Webster on that bridge, but I attribute it to their imagination. I don't believe in ghosts.'

It was from Barnes Bridge that Kate Webster had dropped into the Thames a box containing some of the dismembered remains of her victim. The box was subsequently found in the mud on one of the banks of the river.

The other story is of the Thames near Windsor. One afternoon in the summer of 1920 I was having tea with my wife in a shop in Windsor, and I was wondering if there were any hauntings in Windsor apart from those associated with the Castle. A gentleman sitting at a table close to us overheard what I was saying, and told us that he knew of a haunting very near Windsor.

He said he was walking with a friend along the Windsor to Maidenhead Road one evening, and when they came to a spot near an inlet of the Thames they heard what sounded like someone calling for help. Thinking someone might have fallen into the water and was in danger of being drowned, they ran to the stream. When they got there they could not see anyone and were about to return to the road when footsteps stealthily approached them, and as they instinctively shrank to one side they were conscious of someone, whom they could not see, passing close to them. A moment later there was a splash as if something heavy had fallen or been thrown into the water.

They were very frightened and hastened back to Windsor. They subsequently learned that a few years previously the mutilated body of a girl had been found in the inlet just where they had heard the splash. After the finding of the body the inlet was widely reputed to be haunted.

The narrator of the story said he and his friend had gone to the inlet several times after their ghostly experience, but nothing had happened, and he believed the haunting had ceased, which was probably the case. So many hauntings are only temporary.

The Stowaway

ANOTHER Thames mystery occurred in the summer of 1803. The *Result*, one of Messrs. Green's fine Australian vessels, arrived one day at the Port of London from overseas and dropped anchor in the Thames prior to discharging her passengers and cargo. The moment that the former and their effects had been landed the unloading of the goods in the hold began. Off came the hatches and down into the hold went the men, shouting, hustling and swearing, and soon the work of hauling up casks, crates, bales and packages of all sorts, to be conveyed by cranes or on backs ashore, was in full swing.

Suddenly one of the men engaged in roping boxes paused, and shouting to the man working next to him in the hold to look, pointed excitedly in the direction of two huge piles of goods immediately in front of him.

'What's the matter, Jim?' his mate asked, thinking he had suddenly gone mad.

'Matter!' Jim replied with an oath. 'Why, look there,' and he pointed in the same direction even more emphatically than before.

His mate looked and became excited too, for there in the gloom, standing upright between the packages, was a strange man.

'Blimey!' Jim exclaimed, 'can't you see him? 'E's a stow-away. 'Ere, come out of it,' he went on, addressing the stranger in not at all unkindly tones, for among the poor there is generally much sympathy, 'Come out of it. You're in London now, and if you sneak ashore at once no one will see you.'

But the man apparently did not hear, for he remained silent and did not move. Then Jim's mate said he would see what he could do and, approaching as near to the stowaway as he could get, he told him to get out of the hold the way he got in, and to leave the ship while he had the chance. Still there

was no reply, and the two men looked first at one another and then at the stowaway in utter amazement.

'What's up?' a voice from above shouted authoritatively. 'What's up, below there?'

'Nothing,' Jim answered, somewhat hesitatingly. 'Least-ways, nothing very much.'

'What do you mean by nothing very much?' the voice above shouted again. 'What's up, I say?'

The men stared anxiously at the figure between the boxes. There was no time to lose.

'Come, move out there,' Jim said softly. 'Don't you 'ear me? Move, I say, or someone will be down from the deck as'll make you.'

It was of no use, the threat had no effect. The man remained where he was.

'Come, what is it?' the voice from above shouted furiously. 'If there is nothing the matter, get on with your work. I can't have this job hanging on till Christmas.'

'There's no 'elp for it,' Jim whispered. 'We shall 'ave to give the cove away; 'e must be stone deaf or a looney. Someone's down 'ere, sir,' he shouted.

'What the devil do you mean?' was the angry retort. 'I've had enough of all this nonsense. I shall have to settle it once and for all.' And the owner of the ship, swinging himself down the companion-ladder in a fury, approached the unloaders with an oath.

He changed his tune, however, when he caught sight of the man wedged in among the boxes. 'Hello, that's a landsman, judging by his clothes, a stowaway!' he exclaimed. 'I shall hand him over to the police. Now then,' to the two men, 'don't stand there like dummies. Move the goods away and get at him. Haul him out!'

'Aye, aye, sir,' Jim and his mate chorused, and aided by a third man, who had joined them, they set to work at once.

They had hardly commenced to remove the boxes that apparently were wedging the stowaway in, when he staggered

suddenly forward and fell with a curious sideways movement on to the boards. He was no live man, but a mummified corpse.

His identity was never known, and he would speedily have been forgotten had it not been rumoured that his ghost haunted the ship and the adjacent shore.

The Phantom Policeman

WHEN I first lived in London I stayed for a short time in a small hotel near Waterloo Station. It was cheap, unpretentious and tolerably clean. The people who patronized it were mostly new arrivals in London, like myself. I chatted with one of them, an elderly man named Evans, who told me about a ghostly experience he once had in Thames-side. It happened when he was staying with friends near Rainham. At that time the Thames-side, especially in the vicinity of Rainham and Dagenham, bore a very sinister reputation owing to the number of bad characters that frequented it.

One evening Evans went for a stroll alone. Having been warned about the neighbourhood, he armed himself with a pistol and thick stick. He did not intend to go far, but the weather was so fine, and he felt so well and energetic that he passed through Dagenham and continued walking in a westerly direction. On either side of him were ditches full of stagnant water, covered with duckweed, and beyond them wide tracts of desolate marshy ground. There was a feeling of loneliness and depression in the atmosphere, which intensified the further he progressed.

He was contemplating turning back when he sensed someone behind him. He glanced hastily around and saw coming along the road, with the measured stride characteristic of his vocation, a tall policeman who appeared to be very young. He overtook Evans and passed by him without a word or look. Evans again deliberated turning back, but a force over which he had no control compelled him to follow the policeman, who kept moving ahead with the same measured, automatic stride. He never altered his pace nor made a sound, and there was an indistinctness and shadowiness about him that Evans noticed now for the first time. He continued advancing till he reached the Four Wants, cross roads leading to Ilford, Hornchurch and

Chigwell, when he was swallowed up in the gloom and shadows that enveloped the spot.

Evans realized now that it was no living policeman whom he had been following, but a ghost; and this realization, combined with the loneliness of the surroundings and a feeling of sudden and intense eeriness, unnerved him to such an extent that he turned and made hurriedly for home.

When he related his experience to his friends they exhibited considerable interest and said he must have seen the ghost of a young policeman named Clarke, who had been horribly murdered near the Four Wants some years previously. The apparition of poor Clarke had for a long time been rumoured to haunt the vicinity of Dagenham and the Four Wants, which bore such an uncanny reputation on that account that few persons cared to venture near them after dusk.

An Epping Forest Mystery

WHEN my wife and I were living in the High Street, Kensington, among our acquaintances was Mrs. Deane, a widow, whom we had met recently at a club in Chelsea. She came to tea with us one cold, windy day in March and told us the following strange experience she once had in Epping Forest.

'In my childhood,' she said, 'I lived at Chingford. There were four of us in the family, namely, my father, who was a barrister, my mother, Delphine and myself. Delphine was my twin sister. She was a lovely blonde. We were inseparable, and one of our favourite haunts was in the vicinity of High Beech Hill, known afterwards as Queen Victoria's Wood. The scenery there reminded us of the fairyland in our story books.

'We loved to ramble among the old beech trees and sit under them on hot summer days, chatting and eating fruit. One of the trees had a very strong attraction for us. We called it the Nymph's Pool, and imagined that a nymph sat in a tree overhanging it and sang and combed her beautiful golden hair.

'We both went to school and left the same term. Delphine, after she had been to the Slade School in London, went to Paris, where she shared a studio in the Montparnasse with another girl. I trained for the stage at a dramatic academy in Oxford Street.

'When we were twenty-one years of age we both became engaged to be married, Delphine to a Frenchman, and I to a journalist. My parents and I tried our hardest to persuade Delphine to break off her engagement. My parents did not approve of Delphine marrying a Frenchman, about whom she knew very little. I had met him and did not like him. He struck me as untrustworthy, and I learned his reputation was none too good. Our efforts to prevent Delphine marrying him failed. They were married in Paris, spent their honeymoon in Algiers, and lived in Marseilles, where he had a house.

‘Shortly after Delphine’s marriage I, too, married and left the dramatic academy. My husband and I lived at Loughton, but he was not strong and died before we had been married a year. Though I was left comfortably off I hated being idle and continued training for the stage. After I had finished at the academy I went on tour for a short time and then got a small part in a West-End production.

‘For about a year after her marriage I heard fairly often from Delphine. She seemed happy and spoke in glowing terms of her husband, how kind and generous he was to her and what a gay life they led, with lots of friends and amusements. Gradually, however, her letters came less frequently, and reading between the lines in some of them I got the impression that she was worried and not very happy.

‘I was rehearsing a play that was opening at the Duchess Theatre in a fortnight when I received a brief letter from Delphine saying she and her husband were going to South America. She said she would send me their address when they got there. Weeks and months passed, however, without a line from her. I wrote to her Marseilles address, with “Urgent and kindly forward” on the envelope, but I had no reply. My mother and I—my father was dead—were terribly worried about Delphine, but there was nothing we could do.

‘Another year passed, and then one day I received, to my joy and relief, a cablegram from Delphine saying she was returning to England that very day in the *Zephyr* and would wire to me on her arrival at Liverpool. I found out at the office of the firm that owned the *Zephyr* the day that ship would reach Liverpool.

‘The day before it was due I was sitting in the drawing-room of my old home at Chingford, when I suddenly experienced a sensation of intense coldness. I glanced at the door to see if it was open, but it was shut; the window was open at the top, as the weather was very close.

‘A longing came over me to see the Nymph’s Pool that had had such a peculiar attraction for Delphine and me when we were children, and I set off at once to High Beech Hill. The

tree was on the east side of the Hill. The winding road to it was rather rough and broken in parts, and as I hurried along it I kept thinking about Delphine, wishing it was the next day when I should hear from her and wondering if I should see any change in her.

'When I came within sight of the Nymph's Pool I saw someone standing by it. It was a woman in dark clothes, and on drawing nearer to her I saw, to my utter astonishment, that it was Delphine. I was distressed to see she was very pale and did not look at all well, so thin and wan, not a bit like her old self.

' "Delphine!" I cried joyfully. "What a gorgeous surprise! What bliss to see you again."

'She smiled and held out her arms, and I was running to embrace her when she vanished. There was no Delphine, only the Nymph Tree. Greatly shocked and fearing that something dreadful had happened to Delphine, I hastened home.

'The following morning I received a telegram saying Delphine had died suddenly the previous evening. The doctor who examined her body was of the opinion that death was due to heart disease. She had died at about the time I had seen her apparition.

'In the diary which I found in her trunk she said she had had a terrible time. Her husband had behaved so abominably to her that she had left him.

'If only she had taken my advice and never married him,' Mrs. Deane sighed, 'she might have been alive now.'

The Ghost of the Grinning Woman

My family had associations with Worcestershire. My father had a living in that county. My youngest sister was born there, and my eldest sister was educated first at Powick and then at Malvern.

When I was a boy my mother employed a Miss Milward to do needlework for her: she was the daughter of a Worcestershire farmer, and had two sisters. All three were dressmakers and might have done extremely well, for they were clever, had they not talked rather more than they worked.

The eldest sister, the one who worked for my mother, used to tell me ghost stories which harrowed me to such an extent that I was terrified when alone in the dark. One of the stories was about a haunting of the Severn by the phantom of an old woman named Polly Rigden.

Polly was a very disreputable character. She sold matches, begged, told fortunes, and was occasionally imprisoned for stealing. She was said to have been pretty in her youth but there was little to indicate it in her old age.

She was chiefly to be seen in a street near the Hop Market. Screams were heard one night in the vicinity of the Severn, and in the morning her body was found in the river. There were no marks of violence on it. How she got in the Severn was not known, and the verdict at the inquest was 'found drowned'.

One summer evening soon after the finding of her body, the eldest Miss Milward and her youngest sister were returning home from work by the Severn when they saw an old woman squatting on the bank of the river. She had grey, dishevelled hair and a very wrinkled face. Her dress was much soiled and her elastic-sided boots very down at the heels. She looked like a tramp.

There was something so peculiar about her that the Milwards were puzzled, and stopped and stared at her. She

observed them looking at her, grinned, revealing toothless gums, waved a filthy hand and vanished. They were looking at her one moment and the next second into empty space.

They were not so much scared as mystified, and wondered if they had been dreaming. They had never seen Polly Rigden or heard of her death, but they learned some days after their strange experience that a ghost, believed to be that of Polly, had appeared to several people in the very place where they had seen the strange old woman.

The haunting, like so many hauntings, was only temporary. It continued nightly for two or three weeks and then ceased.

A Sinister Severn Haunting

THE following is one of several stories related to me at various times about the Severn and its ghosts.¹

John Evans was sitting one morning in his room in an hotel in Chicago when he suddenly noticed something on the floor close to his chair. It was a photograph of his sister Mabel. He wondered how it had got on the floor because he always kept it in an album, but thought that it might possibly have become detached and fallen out of the album—but when? His album was in one of the drawers of the bureau and he did not remember moving it, certainly not very recently.

He gazed lovingly at the photograph. He had not seen her for twelve years: she had been only seventeen when he last saw her. It was the night he left home for Liverpool. The photograph brought it all back to him. The dear old farmhouse in Worcestershire nestling among the trees; the lane, with the hedgerows full of wild flowers, leading to it; the stone-flagged hall with the old-fashioned fireplace and chimney corners; the hams hanging from the beams; the grandfather clock ticking solemnly in the corner. His mother trying to keep back her tears; his red-faced, grey-haired father slipping an envelope with money in his hand, telling him in a husky voice to be sure to let them know directly he got to America. Lucy, his eldest sister, just back from riding, handsome in her dark, hard style, and very much the outdoor girl, endeavouring, not at all successfully, to appear sorry he was going; and Mabel, sad-eyed, smiling forcedly through her tears. A pretty family picture marred only, he thought, by Lucy. They never had got on well together.

What changes twelve years had brought about. His mother and father were both dead, Lucy was married and living in

¹ The veracity of the story was guaranteed by the narrator. All names are fictitious.

New Zealand, and Mabel married to William Leek, an architect. The Leeks had no children.

He had always been very fond of Mabel. She was so kind and gentle and sympathetic, such a good, thoughtful girl, not giddy like so many others. He had not heard from her for a long time but, then, it was his fault he had not written to her. Somehow he had been so absorbed in his work that he had never had time for much correspondence. Still, it was very wrong of him not to have written to her.

During the years he had been in America he had been very successful and had accumulated quite a lot of money. He had taken few holidays and always been very thrifty. He was very abstemious, did not smoke, drink anything alcoholic, or gamble. He had few friends. Friends meant spending money, and he had to save, save for his old age. He had not married. He would leave his money to Mabel. He kept thinking about her and gazing yearningly at her photograph. She was extremely attractive. A natural blonde, with golden hair, light blue eyes and a lovely mouth. She was so pure and innocent that he vowed he would kill anyone who ever injured her.

That night he dreamed that someone, whom he instinctively felt was Mabel, came to his bedside and kissed him gently on the forehead. The dream increased his longing to see Mabel to such an extent that he decided to take a holiday and go to England.

He booked a passage in a liner from New York to Liverpool, and on arriving in England set out to the last address he had of Mabel. It was in a small town between Worcester and Tewkesbury. When he arrived at the town he asked the way to The Laurels, the Leeks' house, and was told it was about a mile from the town and close to the Severn.

He was walking by that river in the direction indicated to him when he saw a tall, thin man standing near a tree on the town side of the river. The man was rather elderly, pale and haggard.

He walked ahead of Evans and entered a red-brick house facing the river and about a hundred yards from it. When

Evans reached the house he found it was The Laurels, but to his astonishment there was a board on the railings of the small garden in front of it, saying it was for sale. It appeared to be empty. He knocked and rang several times, but no one came to the door.

He wondered what had become of the man he had seen enter the house, and why, if he was still in it, he did not appear. Much puzzled and bitterly disappointed, he enquired for the Leeks at a small house a little distance from The Laurels.

The lady who lived there asked if he was a stranger in the neighbourhood, and when he answered in the affirmative, without disclosing his identity, she told him that The Laurels had stood empty ever since the tragic death of Mr. William Leek. He had drowned himself in the river on learning that his wife had left him and gone away with a traveller for a large firm of London jewellers.

Evans asked the lady if she knew Mrs. Leek's maiden name. The lady told him that she had heard it was Evans. She said William Leek was his wife's third husband: she had been Mrs. Green, a widow, before Mr. Leek married her. The lady of the house was not sure of the name of Mrs. Leek's first husband but thought it was Welkin or Felkin. She was very attractive, always expensively dressed, and from all accounts was a dreadful flirt. She said everyone had felt sorry for Mr. Leek. She had never met either him or his wife, as she had only been in the district a few months.

Evans thanked her and went. He was terribly upset. To think of Mabel, who had been such a good girl, behaving like that! He remembered having seen a white house very near the river shortly before he saw the man who had entered The Laurels. The people living in the house might have known Mabel. It was just possible that what the woman had just said about her might not have been correct. She had not been acquainted with Mabel, and all she knew about her had been derived from local gossip.

He returned to The Laurels and knocked on the door again and rang the bell. There was still no response, no sign of any

life, and the silent, empty house gave him such an eerie feeling that he quickly left it. He experienced a similar sensation, and in a greater degree, when he was passing the spot by the river where he had first seen the mysterious tall, thin man.

When he enquired about the Leeks at the white house the lady there told him that it was nearly four years since they had left the neighbourhood. The last occupants of The Laurels had been the Leeks. Evans asked her if she was sure about it, and she said of course she was sure, she knew both the families. Mabel Leek was one of her dearest friends.

Evans asked if it was true Mabel had been married three times. The lady laughed and said it certainly was not true. Mabel had only had one husband, Bill, whom she adored. They were devoted to one another. Overjoyed at hearing this, Evans told the lady he was Mabel's brother, and also what the woman in the other house had said about Mabel.

Mrs. Hay, the lady of the white house, said the person he mentioned had only recently come to the district and had probably never heard of the Leeks. When he enquired about them she must have thought that he meant the Leeds. Mrs. Leeds had been married three times, and had not been very fortunate in her marriages. Her first husband was an epileptic, she had to divorce her second husband who ill-used her, and Herbert Leeds was very queer at times. His grandfather and one of his uncles had committed suicide, but Mrs. Leeds had been unaware of this when she married him.

Mrs. Hay said some of the local people thought it very wrong of Mrs. Leeds to leave her husband and go off with another man, but there was some excuse for her conduct. Mr. Leeds was absurdly jealous even if his wife as much as looked at another man, and had been heard to threaten to kill her and himself.

Evans asked Mrs. Hay to describe Herbert Leeds, and her description of him tallied with the tall, thin apparition Evans had seen enter The Laurels. He told Mrs. Hay about the ghost, and she said several people she knew had seen it too, and that it was known to haunt The Laurels and the river. She said that

the river, however, was well known to be haunted long before Leeds drowned himself in it, and she wondered if the haunting might not have affected him. She had often felt there was something very sinister about the spot where he had committed suicide.

Evans chatted with her for some time, and she gave him Mabel's address. It was in Hove. Immensely relieved at what she had told him, he thanked her very much and, without letting Mabel know, he set off at once to Hove.

The Leeks were at home when he arrived at their house and were delighted to see him. He thought Mabel was even more attractive than when he last saw her, and when he looked at her and her husband he felt assured that what Mrs. Hay had said about them was true, and that they really were a very happy and devoted couple.

The Haunting of Dipdale Hole

FROM time to time there are strange stories of ghostly happenings at Dipdale Hole in the Midlands, and this is one of them.

In the days before the advent of motor-cars and aeroplanes there were living at Cramton, a small country town within about sixty miles of Worcester, Mr. and Mrs. Melorine and their young, extremely attractive daughter, Peggy. As was only natural, she had many admirers. Among them were two young men, Carlo Hervadar, a South American, who was reputed to be very rich, and Charlie Carter, the son of a local clergyman.¹

There was much speculation in Cramton as to which of these two young men Peggy liked best.

To celebrate her twenty-first birthday her parents gave a ball and purposely omitted to invite Carter. This omission gave great offence to Peggy, who informed her parents that she hated Hervadar and was very fond of Carter. Her father promptly forbade Carter to come to the house or communicate in any way with Peggy. Carter was a bank clerk, and Mr. Melorine was very desirous that his charming daughter should marry someone wealthy. Carter, who was well liked in Cramton, received much sympathy.

The night of the dance arrived, and to the astonishment of all the guests, among the first to enter the ballroom was Carter. He had got into the house unobserved. Mr. Melorine wanted to have him turned out at once, but on Peggy saying that if he did, she would at once retire to her room and not show her face again till the morning, he sulkily gave in, and Charlie was allowed to remain.

Then came surprise number two. Peggy, looking more beautiful than ever in a new dress, was standing in the centre of a host of admiring men of all ages, and Hervadar and Charlie Carter, who had been regarding one another with anything but

¹ All names in this story are fictitious.

amiable looks, were getting ready to approach her and petition for dances, when a new arrival suddenly appeared on the scene.

He was a slim, very boyish-looking young man, clean-shaven, of medium height, and immaculately dressed. His features were almost too regular and effeminate for a male, and he had very beautiful hands.

There was something oddly arrestive about him, and he at once became the cynosure of all eyes. Going up to Peggy, as if he had known her all his life, he bowed, and asked for the first dance, which, to the indignation of all around, she smilingly gave him. What followed took away everyone's breath.

The two danced together most of the evening. Mr. and Mrs. Melorine stormed, and Hervadar pleaded, but it was of no avail. Peggy was to all appearances tremendously infatuated. She had eyes and ears for no one but her clean-shaven, boyish-looking partner, whom she called Terry.

In the supper interval there was a scene. Hervadar made an insulting remark about Terry, who heard him and threw the contents of a wineglass in his face. A fight would undoubtedly have ensued had not several of the guests interfered. Nothing further happened that night, and when the hour for departure came the guests left the house quietly and seemingly on very good terms with one another.

After the ball Peggy and Terry were constantly seen together, and it was rumoured that they were engaged to be married. Mr. Melorine and Carlo Hervadar were greatly distressed by her conduct, but to people's surprise neither Mrs. Melorine nor Carter seemed to trouble.

After this state of affairs had gone on for several weeks Terry suddenly left Cramton, and was said to have gone to Buenos Aires to find out all he could about Hervadar, who was supposed to be a native of that town.

About three months after Terry's departure for South America Peggy Melorine called on her bosom friend, Effie Miller, and joyfully informed her that Terry had returned to England and would arrive at Cramton the following day. She

announced her intention of going to the station in the evening to meet him. On her way home, however, she met with an accident, and had to remain indoors all the next day.

That same day Effie Miller visited her aged aunt, Miss Emma Brown, who lived in a village about four miles from Cramton. It was getting dusk when she set out on her homeward journey, and the road she took was lonely and little frequented. It led past Dipdale Hole, a deep, dark circular pit, at the bottom of which was a pool covered with green slime, and believed by the local people to be unfathomable.

When she came to the Hole she paused and shuddered. It always had that effect on her. There was something frightening about the trees that surrounded it; they did not seem to her to be ordinary trees, but trees that were watching her with hidden, baleful eyes. The air had suddenly grown so chilly that she quickly left the Hole and continued on her way.

She had reached Corpse Copse, so named because the dead body of a tramp had been found in it, when she heard the sound of approaching wheels, and in a moment or two a gig appeared. The moon was now visible and the light from it enabled her to see very clearly the two occupants of the gig. Hervadar was driving and, to her astonishment, seated next to him was his supposed rival, Terry, who took off his hat to her and smiled. She heard the gig for a short time after it had passed her, and it seemed to stop suddenly. A moment later she heard a cry so full of terror that her blood froze. She tried to persuade herself that it was a night bird and quickened her steps, never pausing till she had reached Cramton.

In the morning she called at the Melorines and told Peggy that she had seen Terry driving along the Dipdale Hole Road with Hervadar. 'I did not know they were friends,' she said.

'They are not!' Peggy exclaimed. 'Are you sure it was Terry?'

Effie nodded. 'Quite sure. He took off his hat to me and smiled.'

'If that is the case,' Peggy said, 'I shall see him very soon. He may be here any moment.'

But the morning and the afternoon and the evening passed, and no Terry came.

In spite of her intense dislike of Hervadar, Peggy sent for him.

'I hear you drove Mr. Terry along the Dipdale Road yesterday,' she said. 'Where is he?'

Hervadar shook his head. 'You have been misinformed,' he replied. 'I did give a lift to a man last night, but he was a stranger. I never saw him before and have not seen him since. I put him down at the road to Melham.'

Peggy made enquiries at Mirby, the nearest railway station to Cramton, and a porter told her that a young man answering to her description of Terry had got out there early the previous evening, and had set out on foot along the Cramton road. Some minutes later he had seen Hervadar take the same road in his gig. The moon was full at the time and, the light from it being powerful, he could see Hervadar's face very plainly. This was all Peggy could learn at Mirby station.

Bill Watts, a boy whom the Melorines employed occasionally to help in the garden, had something to tell her. He lived at Mirby, where Hervadar also lived. He said he was returning home from work at about seven o'clock on the evening that Effie Miller had declared she had seen Terry with Hervadar, and he was near Dipdale Hole when he heard a cry. It was like a woman, a woman, he thought, in a great fright. It gave him a start. A minute or two later Hervadar passed him in a gig: he was alone and going in the direction of Mirby.

Soon after Bill Watts's tale, stories of ghostly happenings at Dipdale Hole were current. Gruesome lights were said to be seen around the Hole and ghostly cries heard in its depths. Few people dared to venture near it alone after nightfall. The haunting, like most hauntings, was intermittent. There were periods when nothing ghostly occurred, and it was during one of these intervals that a man, who had been lowered into the Hole to rescue a dog that had fallen into it, found a skeleton.

The height and build of the skeleton corresponded very closely to those of Terry, and Cramton people, remembering

the stories that were in circulation at the time of Terry's disappearance, were of the opinion that the skeleton was his. Great was their astonishment when the medical man who examined the skeleton pronounced it to be that of a woman. There were no marks of violence on it.

People who recollected Terry's effeminate appearance and ways inclined to the belief that Terry might well have been a woman. They could get nothing out of Peggy, who had married Charlie Carter. Whenever they questioned her she invariably gave a non-committal answer and turned the subject. They thought it not unlikely that she and her husband had known Terry was a woman all along, and had employed her as a means of getting rid of Hervadar. Did Hervadar, they wondered, believing Terry to be a man and his rival, murder Terry the night Effie stated she saw Hervadar and Terry driving along Dipdale Hole Road in a gig?

Hervadar left Mirby soon after Terry's disappearance and was believed to have returned to South America.

The fate of Terry and the identity of the skeleton in Dipdale Hole were, however, mysteries that were never really solved, and the haunting of the Hole and trees around it has continued intermittently to this day.

The Strange Disappearance of John Harper, Cripple

IN a Midland town in the early 'eighties there lived a Mr. and Mrs. Harper and their son, John.

A cripple from his birth, John's case had been regarded as quite hopeless till just before his nineteenth birthday, when he suddenly showed signs of getting better. To everyone's surprise he was not only able to leave his bed but to hobble about the house and garden.

When not otherwise occupied he would sit on the lawn in front of the house, watching the passers-by. Sometimes a pretty face would attract his attention, for John was an extraordinary mixture of the materialist and the idealist.

Then one morning he received a letter from his friends, the Browns at Quintox, a village twenty miles distant from his own, inviting him to spend the day with them.

John was quite overcome with joy. After being looked upon as a hopeless invalid all his life, to be asked by his friends to spend the day with them, just as they would ask a normal boy, was to him a wonderful thing.

His parents, when he told them, did not know what to say. With the aid of a crutch, it was true, the boy could hobble about the grounds, but he had never walked farther than the pillar-box. To get to Quintox he would have to walk to the railway station, a distance of a quarter of a mile.

John's father did not like the idea of John going alone on his journey. He thought he should have someone to look after him.

John, however, would not hear of it. He was nineteen, he said, and quite capable of taking care of himself, even if he was rather lame. He had his way in the end.

The eventful day arrived. It was a perfect summer morning.

The air fragrant with the scent of flowers. A cloudless blue sky and a glorious sun.

The entire household watched John depart. His father accompanied him to the station and helped him to get a seat in the train.

At half past five o'clock that same day his father and mother set off to the station in plenty of time to meet the train by which he was to return.

They waited impatiently on the platform for the signal to fall, and when it fell, and the train rounded the curve, known locally as The Elbow, their agitation and excitement was extreme.

After what seemed to them an eternity the train at last reached the platform and halted.

They peered eagerly into carriage after carriage hoping to see John. To their great dismay he was not in the train.

The Harpers were almost out of their mind. They anticipated the worst. The station-master, anxious to allay their fears, wired at once to the station-master at Quintox asking him to send someone to Mr. Brown's, to find out why young Mr. Harper hadn't returned.

When the reply came it proved a veritable thunderbolt. John was not at the Browns, and he hadn't been there.

'We expected him by the first train in the morning,' they wired, 'but he didn't come. What has happened?'

'Good God, what can have happened?' Mr. Harper ejaculated. 'What can we do?'

'Very possibly he forgot to get out of the train at Quintox and was taken on to Birmingham,' the station-master remarked.

'But he's not at all forgetful, and it was to Quintox that he was so bent on going,' Mr. Harper replied. 'Besides, even if he had gone on to Birmingham by mistake, surely he would have taken the first train he could catch back, and have arrived at the Browns later on in the day.'

In a state bordering on distraction Mr. Harper took the train to Quintox, and arriving there questioned the station officials, but none of them could give him any definite information.

The porter who took the tickets from the passengers as they left the platform said he thought a lame gentleman was among those who had arrived by the train in question, but he couldn't be sure. More people than usual seemed to have come by that train, and as they passed out of the station all together he had not noticed anyone in particular.

Mr. Harper then hastened to the Browns. From them he learned that they did not get to the station to meet John till five minutes after the train he was to come by had left.

If he had come, they argued, he would surely either have started off to walk to their house, in which case they would have met him on the road, or waited for them.

They were almost as upset as Mr. Harper himself, and remarking that possibly John had gone to the fair, they suggested searching for him there. A thorough search of all the booths and the grandstand proved fruitless.

At last, wearied and dispirited, they left the place. On wending their way to the station some children came running after them.

'Are you looking for a lame old gentleman?' they asked.

'Not a lame old gentleman,' Mr. Harper replied impatiently; 'a lame young gentleman.'

'Well, we don't know what age he really was,' a girl said, 'but he seemed old compared with us. He stopped us outside the station this morning, as we were going home from school, and enquired the way to some house.'

'Was it The Lindens?' Mr. Brown asked eagerly—The Lindens was the name of his house.

But none of the children could remember.

He went on, they said, along the lane leading to the old canal.

Asked to describe him, one girl thought he was very fair with a slight moustache, a description that fitted John, while another girl was of the opinion that he was dark and clean shaven.

The search-party steered for the canal.

The sun by this time had sunk low and the sky was dark

and lowering. A silence that harmonized well with the shadows of the tall, motionless trees that skirted the lane, hung over the searchers as they walked. They seldom spoke.

The scenery surrounding the canal was drear and depressing. The stone wall of the abandoned lock was mouldering and covered with weeds. Close to the lock was a derelict cabin.

'This is a nasty place,' Mr. Harper exclaimed, as he bent down and peered into the dark, sullen water. 'One can imagine anything horrible happening here.'

At that moment there was a loud, wailing cry which seemed to come from the canal. It startled the searchers. Mr. Harper shivered. To him there was something ominous in the cry. They searched around for John until the morning when, utterly exhausted and dispirited, they were obliged to give up hunting and to return home.

The police dragged the canal and searched the whole neighbourhood but could discover no trace of John. And to this day his fate has remained a complete mystery.

The Harpers always believed that John was murdered and that his body was thrown into the canal where it became embedded in the mud and weeds out of reach of the drag-nets of the police.¹

¹ All names in this story are fictitious.

The Mystery of Lydia Atley

ONE beautiful evening in July 1850, John Hill, inhabitant of the little village of Ringstead, Northamptonshire, felt inspired to go for an after-supper stroll. The truth of the matter was he had eaten somewhat heartily and thought a turn in the open air before retiring to bed might ward off a nightmare. The clouds that had hung low in the sky all the afternoon had gradually cleared away, and now there was no trace of them, only an ultramarine sky, star-spangled and moonlit.

John Hill had crossed one large field, sweet with the scent of clover and new-mown hay, and was close to the stile leading into a narrow, winding lane, when he was arrested by the sound of footsteps and voices that came to him with singular clearness amid the general silence of his surroundings.

Villagers are not infrequently curious, and Hill was no exception. Creeping to the hedge overhanging the lane he cautiously peeped over and saw two people approaching him. The moonlight pouring on them threw their faces into strong relief; and he recognized one as Lydia Atley, the pretty nineteen-year-old daughter of a Ringstead labourer, and the other as Weekly Ball, a well-to-do Ringstead tradesman. Ball being a married man, with considerable pretensions to being 'respectable', his appearance at this time of the day, in such a spot with a girl who had the reputation for being just a little 'giddy', not unnaturally excited Hill's interest. He noticed Lydia looked very haggard and agitated, and Ball sullen.

Just as they passed him by he heard Lydia remark: 'I won't, Weekly Ball, I won't do or say anything of the kind. It's yours, yours, I tell you, and no one else's.' Ball mumbled out something Hill could not catch in reply. They went on down the lane, in the direction of the lonely orchard belonging to Weekly Ball, and finally Hill lost sight of them.

About half an hour later another inhabitant of Ringstead,

Joseph Groom, was passing by the orchard when he heard voices. He at once stopped to listen. A girl was speaking, and he felt sure it was Lydia Atley, whom he knew well. 'I did not intend coming in here with you tonight, Weekly Ball,' she said, 'for I've got the feeling you intend killing me. Isn't it so?'

Anxious to hear what the reply would be and who made it, Groom listened very eagerly, but he couldn't catch the slightest sound. There was an emphatic silence, broken at last by the woman saying, 'The Lord have mercy on me if I am to die in my present state of sin'; the last sentence sounded very feeble, as if the speaker was getting more and more exhausted.

Had Groom only entered the orchard at this juncture, and surely he had good excuse for so doing, one of the greatest of all Northamptonshire mysteries might have been nipped in the bud, but, perhaps out of mere selfishness, or shall we say just cowardice, he refrained and set off home at once.

The following day Ringstead learned Lydia Atley was missing from her home. She had failed to return at night, and her parents had not the slightest idea of her whereabouts. The local police were notified, and suspicion falling on Weekly Ball, as a result of the tales told by John Hill and Joseph Groom respectively, his orchard was searched, not, perhaps, with the greatest thoroughness. At all events no trace of her could be found. An anonymous letter was received by a local magistrate stating she had been seen since her reported disappearance by the writer of the letter, in Gold Street, Northampton. Little value, however, was attached to the letter, the magistrates and the police believing it to be a hoax.

It was thought that Weekly Ball knew more of the matter than he cared to disclose. He admitted meeting Lydia the night of her disappearance and escorting her as far as the orchard, where he declared they parted. He said he had kept company with her, and fearing that fact would come to the knowledge of his wife, had given her money on condition she left the village and never communicated with him again. Against this was the story told by Groom, but as no body could be found, nothing was done, and the affair was let drop.

Years passed, and then, suddenly, interest in it was revived. Digging in a ditch in the lane leading from Denford to Keystone one morning in the winter of 1864, a labourer came upon an entire skeleton, which the doctor who was summoned pronounced to be that of a woman between sixteen and twenty years of age. The ditch being close to the orchard that had at one time belonged to Weekly Ball, the disappearance of Lydia Atley was at once recalled to mind. A tooth in the left side of the jaw of the skull was missing, and a local man named Dix, declaring he had drawn a corresponding tooth from Lydia's mouth about a fortnight before she disappeared, the suspicion that it was her skeleton substantially increased.

Once again the local police took up the case, and as a result Weekly Ball, who was now living in Northumberland, was arrested. He was brought before the Thrapston magistrates on the charge of murdering Lydia Atley. It was urged by the prosecution that Ball had a very good reason for wanting Lydia out of the way. He had got her into trouble and was fearful of his wife finding out, also for his reputation in the village. It was the same old story that has figured so often in the annals of crime, and which, in all probability, will figure in them just as often again, for human nature, especially the dark and cruel side of it, unhappily, never changes. Hill and Groom told their respective tales in court, as did the man who had drawn Lydia's tooth and the doctor who had examined the remains. The evidence against Ball, though circumstantial, was undoubtedly strong.

The defence proved the spot where the skeleton had been found had long been used by the gipsies as an unhallowed cemetery for their dead. And Ball argued that the skeleton found there was that of a gipsy and not of Lydia Atley. He left the court a free man.

For a long time after the disappearance of Lydia Atley, which was fully reported in the contemporary Northamptonshire journals, people declared that when they were walking or driving along the Denford to Keystone lane at night they saw a girl who closely resembled Lydia Atley. She was looking

ghastly pale and agitated. She always disappeared very suddenly and mysteriously at the spot where the skeleton was found. People also said that when they were passing a deep pool not far from Weekly Ball's orchard they heard dreadful cries and saw eerie lights. The lane and the pool acquired such ghostly reputations that no one liked to venture near them alone after nightfall.

The Riddle of the Skeleton

ONE cold winter's evening in the thirties of the last century, a young girl sat knitting by the bedside of an aged woman. Outside, the wind raged furiously, howling down the chimney. Every now and again when the noise was at its highest pitch the old woman would sigh and moan and begin to say her prayers, and whenever there was a temporary lull she would leave off and lie absolutely still.

This state of things had gone on for some hours, and it was fast approaching midnight, when quite suddenly the old beldame raised a white and skinny hand and beckoned to the girl.

'Liza,' she whispered, 'I feel I shan't live till morning. The wind in the chimney tells me so. 'Tis no ordinary storm. Fetch Samuel. I have something I want to tell you both.'

Liza rose and, hastening up the rickety flight of wooden steps that led to the little room above, prepared to awake Samuel. To her relief, however, he was not asleep, and, on hearing what her mission was, he at once got up and accompanied her downstairs. Directly they were both in the room, seated close to her, the old woman began:

'It was one morning thirty years ago. I forget the day of the month, I never could remember dates; I only recollect it was in the winter, an icy day like this. I was housekeeper then to William Smith. He used to live at the farm just outside this village on the road to Oakham.'

Samuel nodded.

'Well, in those days,' the old woman went on, 'I weren't so bad-looking. At least William Smith didn't think so, and—but there, I may as well tell you, for 'tis all part and parcel of my confession—your mother was his child—our child.'

'Listen. It was a bad, wild day like this, thirty years ago, I tell you, that I was sitting in the parlour at the farm, cutting

out a dress from some expensive material William Smith had brought me a day or two before from London. William suddenly entered the room. I could see at once by his face that something was wrong, and he told me that he was very pressed for money. Certain speculations he had been indulging in lately had failed, he was in debt, and unless he could meet certain of his creditors immediately he would very likely have to go to prison.

‘We talked it over,’ the old woman went on, ‘and I suggested all sorts of things, none of which struck William as at all practical. “Well,” he said at length, “there is only one hope as far as I can see and that lies in Ben Johnson.” “Who’s he?” I asked. “Why, the beast jobber from Freiston,” William replied, “the fellow from whom I bought those twenty cattle the week before last. He is coming here today for the money which I promised him ten days ago. Johnson has heaps of money, and maybe, if both of us—for you must help me, mind—tried very hard, we could persuade him not only to give us a little longer to pay him, but also lend us a little. It is our one chance. It is either that or jail.”’

‘I promised William I would do my best with Johnson. But, when Johnson came, my heart sank, for I saw there was little or no hope as far as he was concerned.

‘He was a big, florid-faced individual, with ugly, projecting teeth, a coarse, impudent, leering mouth, and very furtive, ferrety eyes.

‘“Well, Mr. Smith,” he began, the moment he entered the house, “I’ve come after that money—two hundred pounds—and I don’t leave this house till I get it!”’

‘Well, William called me, and we both begged and implored, but it was of no avail. Thinking a glass or two of wine—real port, fifty years old at least, which William’s uncle had left him along with a few other things—might appease him, we plied him with it, but it made no difference. He drank it, glass after glass, but he still demanded the money, and, using the most dreadful language, swore he would get it or see us both hanged.’

Here the old woman once again paused, and once more the

two listeners could hear the storm roaring and raging with greater violence than ever round the cottage.

Presently she began talking again.

'It was I that first thought of it,' she croaked, 'to be turned out of doors into the roads and lanes with nowhere to rest—it was impossible. Anything was better than that. To save time and enable me to ransack my brains and think, I plied him with more and more port, and when he wasn't looking I fetched a sleeping-draught which old Mother Carey had given me.

'He never saw me slip it in, and he drank it all. He was soon lolling back in his chair, fast asleep, with a fat, yellow leather wallet bulging out of his vest pocket.

'Directly I saw that wallet a hideous thought flashed through my mind. Why not kill Johnson? I had no sooner conceived the idea than I whispered it to Smith.

'To do Smith justice, he was overwhelmed with horror at first, and it was only after I had explained to him that it was really the only way to save both of us from ruin that he eventually yielded. We then stripped Johnson of all the valuables he had on him, and popping him, still sleeping, into a sack, carried him between us to an empty, isolated cottage, two or three hundred yards from the farm. When we arrived there we laid him on the floor, and, after making sure no one was looking, we proceeded to carry out our terrible design.

'Unfortunately, the jogging and jarring on the road had awakened him, and he was beginning to struggle violently to free himself from the sack. I knelt on him, and, pressing his head down with all my might, bade William do the rest.

'We weighted the sack with stones and carried it to the River Given, which was only a few yards distant, and dropped it in the water. Oh, that river I shall never forget! It has haunted me day and night. It looked so dark and deep and flowed so swiftly, swollen with several days of rain. It had always been haunted. I never saw the ghost but William did; a headless woman in a white dress.

After we had disposed of the body we went back to the cottage and cleared away, as best we could, all traces of what

we had done. The money we had obtained enabled William to pay off several of his worst debts, and we remained in the farm for some years. We could never get the murder out of our minds, and were constantly tormented with visions of Ben Johnson struggling to get out of the sack. We never went near the old cottage or the river after dusk if we could help.'

The old woman paused with the exhaustion of talking and sank back on her pillow. Suddenly she cried: 'Quick! Quick! Give me your hands. The river, the river! The sack, the sack! Hold me fast. Don't let go of me. I'm—I'm dying. I dare not go alone'; and she expired.

Samuel and Liza reported her confession to the local clergyman, and there was a report of it in the Lincolnshire Press. A schoolmaster named Hinds saw it, and at once associated it with his cousin, Benjamin Johnson, who had been last seen alive in 1801. Johnson had been a cattle jobber, and on the morning of December 24 had set out from a place near Oakham with a stranger in the neighbourhood, known as Bailey, with the avowed intention of visiting William Smith, a farmer, who owed him a considerable sum of money.

When they were about halfway they met a farmer named Hacket. This farmer testified to having paid Johnson several hundreds of pounds, and he declared that after the completion of the transaction he had seen Johnson and Bailey set off together down a lane leading direct to Smith's farm.

When Smith was asked if Johnson had visited him he said the only person who had called at his farm on the day in question had been one of his old friends, a man named Jones, who had gone abroad, where, he did not know.

The river maintained its grim secret. The sack with the body was never found.¹

¹ *Ideas*, June 1922.

The Featureless Horror

My great-grandmother, Elizabeth Fowke of Elmsthorpe, Leicestershire, like some of her forbears and descendants, was keenly interested in the supernatural. Her father, John Fowke, who was descended through his ancestors, Edward Shuckburgh of Naseby and Sir Thomas Halford, Bart., from William of Wykeham, Lord High Chancellor of England and Founder of New College, Oxford, and Winchester College, had a private museum of valuable coins and curios.

In his collection was a glass bottle containing a number of curious figures, with the head of an ecclesiast for a stopper. The bottle, which was between three and four hundred years old, was regarded as a talisman and a protection against evil spirits. It was bequeathed to Elizabeth, and is now mine.

Elizabeth had several ghostly experiences, and the following is one of them.

On one occasion she was driving with her father along a little-frequented road between Leicester and Lutterworth. It was getting dusk and they had come to a gloomy hollow, when their horse came to an abrupt halt, indicating signs of fear. John Fowke, at a loss to understand the animal's unusual behaviour, plied his whip but without avail. Determined to ascertain the cause of the horse's fright, Elizabeth alighted, while her father remained seated, holding the reins.

She was no sooner on the ground when she heard a curious sound close beside her. She looked quickly around her and saw a tall, hooded figure in black come through the wayside hedge and cross the road towards a solitary tree. When it reached the tree it turned slowly round, threw back its hood and revealed a gleaming white face, which appeared to be entirely devoid of features. Where they should have been was just a blank.

Elizabeth was terror-stricken and felt on the verge of fainting, when her father, whose attention had been concen-

trated on the horse, called to her. Directly he spoke the apparition vanished. Elizabeth scrambled into the carriage and was hardly seated when the horse, having recovered from its fright, spurred forward and bore them without a halt to their destination.

They subsequently learned that the tree, under which the hooded phantom had stood and vanished, had been reputed to be haunted for very many years. There was nothing, so far as was known, to account for the haunting.

My great-grandmother sustained no ill effects from her ghostly experience, a fact she attributed to the protecting influence of the glass bottle, which she always kept on a table by her bedside and treated with the greatest reverence and affection.

Monks of Death

THE following story was told me by Mrs. Grey, a lady who came to one of my talks in London.

Her grandmother, Mrs. Miles, was walking one evening with her friend, Miss Beal, along a country road in Hampshire. It was one of those evenings, far too few in this country, when there is a cloudless blue sky, dry roads and the air is fragrant with the delicious scent of flowers and new-mown hay.

'I never remember such a truly heavenly evening,' Miss Beal exclaimed. 'I could breathe in this air for ever.' And throwing back her head and opening her mouth, she drew in deep gulps.

'And how silent it is,' Mrs. Miles remarked. 'How plainly we can hear the wind in the telegraph poles and trees. Listen!'

They stood still and listened to the plaintive moaning and sighing of the wind as it rustled through the trees and bushes.

Suddenly they saw rising, so it seemed, from a pond on one side of the road a couple of hundred yards ahead of them, a figure habited like a monk. He was a tall man and advanced towards them with long strides. As he drew nearer they saw his face, and were struck simultaneously with the old worldness of it. It seemed to be a throw-back into long centuries past, and was just such a face as they had seen in paintings depicting monks and friars of the Middle Ages.

He came hurriedly on, and passing them by, without as much as casting a glance in their direction, was continuing his course onward when, quite suddenly, they lost sight of him. One instant he was moving along the centre of the broad white road, and the next instant he had vanished.

They discussed the incident all their way home, and mentioned it to their landlady, who was a very old inhabitant of the locality.

'I often heard tell of the monks when I was a girl,' she said.

'My father always said he saw one one night when he was going to see my mother—it was in his courting days—but I never set eyes on one myself. It is said they never appear to anyone save as a kind of warning. Maybe you will hear news in the morning.'

They did, for Miss Beal received a telegram about noon, saying that a very near and dear relative of hers was dead. She had died just about the hour Miss Beal and Mrs. Miles had seen the phantom monk.

Another story relating to a ghostly monk seen in the same locality was told me by a man, in whose house I was lodging when I was on tour. It was after the show was over, and I was chatting with him and a fellow actor before I went to bed.

'I had been marketing with my father,' the man said, 'and we were late in starting for home. It was a rather long walk but I was very young and strong and did not mind the distance. It was New Year's Eve and mild for the season. The sky was cloudy and there was a slight ground mist.

'My father was not very talkative. I think all the tongue-wagging he had done during the day had tired him, and he marched silently along the lonely, deserted road. He had been in the army when he was young, and there were times, I fancy, when he imagined that he was still a soldier. I found it difficult to keep up with him and from time to time lagged a little distance in his rear. I amused myself by throwing stones at various objects, as boys so often do.

'We had passed a derelict mill, and I was throwing stones into the mill pond when I caught sight of a tall figure moving along parallel with us. It was on the other side of the low wall which skirted the road, and it was advancing in the same direction as ourselves.

'At first I thought it was a woman, but on looking at it more closely I came to the conclusion it was a man, not only on account of its great height—I reckoned it must be at least six feet tall—but also because of its build and its exceedingly long strides.

'There being, as I have stated, a mist, I could not see with

any great distinctness what it was wearing. It seemed to be enveloped in some kind of long, flowing garment, which I took to be a fancy dress of sorts, and I concluded it was a gentleman returning home from a New Year's ball.

'Ceasing to throw stones my interest became wholly absorbed in watching the figure and in speculating who it could be. We continued walking along in this fashion for some considerable time, always keeping pretty well abreast of each other, until we came within a short distance of a spot where the wall terminated, and there was a bridge over a stream.

'Well, when we were close to this spot, the moon suddenly began to emerge from behind a bank of clouds and to show itself for the first time that evening.

'What riveted my attention was the figure. I could see it as clearly now as I could see my father, and I was not a little surprised to note that the garments which had puzzled me so sorely were those of a monk.

'I could not see his face, because, for one thing, he never looked round at us, and, for another thing, it was partly concealed by a hood. When, however, he came to the bridge he halted, and on my glancing back to see what he was doing, he had vanished.

'The road and fields were bathed in moonbeams, and every object in them was as plainly revealed as if it had been broad daylight, but there was no monk, nor vestige of one.

'Much mystified I ran after my father and catching him up said: "Father, did you see that man dressed up as a monk? What has become of him?" I was about to say something else but paused, and stared wonderingly at my father.

'His face in the moonlight looked like a sheet, it was so white. But that was not all. There was an expression of terror in his eyes, his mouth twitched, and his legs shook.'

Here my informant stopped for a moment, whilst he refilled his pipe.

'I can tell you, sir,' he went on again, 'I was scared. Nothing could have frightened me more than seeing my father, whom I had always regarded as a man of iron nerves, frightened.

‘ “What is it, Dad?” I asked, in a very faltering voice.

‘ “Charlie,” he replied, and his voice shook. “Charlie, maybe you’ve heard someone speak of ghosts. Well, what you saw just now, that monk, was a ghost. Did you see its face?”

‘ “No,” I replied.

‘ “Thank God for that then,” he responded, “maybe it won’t be so bad after all. Now not another word about it till we get home.”

‘He did not refer to the subject again till we were all seated at breakfast, when he suddenly remarked: “I told you, Charlie, my boy, that what we both saw last night was a ghost. It was. I saw it once before, about twenty years ago. But neither then nor last night did I see its face, for which I’m thankful.

‘ “They say, that is the old folk around here say, it is the ghost of some monk who was once bricked up alive in a monastery, and that periodically it is seen wandering about the countryside. So long as you don’t see its face, which, according to report, is terrible, it don’t much matter, but should it look at you, then, without doubt, you will die very shortly.

‘ “Bill Wiggan, two days before he died, told me he had just seen it on the high road, and that it had looked at him; and it also showed its face to Ben Smith, who died very soon afterwards. I reckon you and I, lad, will live a good while yet, but we’ve had an escape”.’

New Forest Hauntings

A STRANGE story of the New Forest was told me by Mr. Robert Martin,¹ a reader of my books.

In his youth Mr. Martin, who was now elderly, lived in the neighbourhood of the New Forest. When his grandparents were young and the Forest was considerably larger than it is today, there were people living in its vicinity who firmly believed that it was haunted; that on stormy nights, when the lightning flashed and the rain and the wind lashed the great trees, witches came there on their broomsticks and danced the Carole in the moonlit glades. Mr. Martin said the belief that the Forest harboured ghosts was prevalent in his boyhood, and from what he had been told was still extant.

He related to me an experience of his father in the Forest. At the time it happened his father was a young man. He went for a walk one afternoon in the neighbourhood of Mark Ash Wood, about which he had heard strange tales of ghostly happenings.

He was walking along a narrow path when a queer creature emerged from a pool on one side of the road, and ran ahead of him. It was white, with long ears, was rather like a hare and yet was not a hare. He had never seen any animal quite like it. He had a funny feeling that it was not really an animal but of a species peculiar to itself. It fascinated and attracted him in a very extraordinary manner. He followed it to a small clearing, in the centre of which was a great beech tree. The thing ran to the tree and vanished. His father examined the tree but could find no hollow in it. He stayed close to the tree, hoping he would see the queer thing again. With the advent of twilight the silence and loneliness of the spot affected him to such a degree that he hurried out of the Forest and hastened home.

He was so anxious to see the queer thing again that he

¹ All names in this story are fictitious.

went to the Forest the following evening. He was walking along the narrow path to the tree in the glade when a woman emerged from close beside the pool and tripped lightly ahead of him. She wore a dark cloak over a light dress, and very high-heeled shoes, with large buckles that sparkled in the moonlight. His father followed her.

She went to the tree in the clearing and, on reaching it, turned and smiled. She was young and very lovely. His father was enraptured. She laughed, kissed her hand and stepped, as it seemed to him, straight into the tree and vanished. He lingered around the tree for some minutes and then went home.

At this time, Martin explained, on the outskirts and round the vast heaths were a number of huts, whose inmates were for the most part nominally woodmen and charcoal-burners. They were generally an indolent mob, poor and wretched, who, instead of trying to do honest work, made a precarious livelihood by deer-stealing, snaring hares and rabbits and purloining timber.

Martin's father sought these people, who were thoroughly acquainted with the New Forest, and told them about the lovely woman and strange thing he had seen near Mark Ash Wood.

'That neighbourhood,' they said, 'is well known to be haunted by the ghost of Mary Dore, the famous Beaulieu Witch. She possessed the power to assume any form she liked, and used to earn her living by stealing and telling fortunes. The figure that you saw emerge from the pool was her ghost, and the queer creature was either her or one of her familiar spirits.'

The ghost of Mary Dore infatuated Martin's father to such a degree that he visited the pool and tree night after night in the hope of seeing her. But he never saw her or the queer thing ever again.

I asked Martin if he had ever seen a ghost in the New Forest, and he told me that he had on one occasion. It was when he was in his teens. He was walking one evening in the part of the Forest in which his father had seen the ghost of Mary

Dore, and was threading his way along the narrow path there when he saw a tall, hooded figure in black approaching him.

The light from the moon, which was full, threw it into strong relief, and there was something so eerie in its appearance and the way in which it was striding towards him that Martin was scared. As it drew nearer it uncovered its head, and he was horrified to see the face of a skeleton. An unearthly light glowed in its cavernous eye-sockets and its hideous, fleshless mouth grinned, revealing disgusting long, decayed teeth. As it strode noiselessly past Martin he smelt the cold, horrid air of the charnel house fan his face. He turned and saw it vanish in the pool from which his father had seen the two phantoms emerge.

When he told his father what he had seen, his father said it was probably one of the evil spirits that haunted the Forest in the days of his grandparents. He felt sure it was not the witch.¹

¹ The Second Duke of Montague, the proprietor of Beaulieu, was a firm believer in the supernatural endowments of Mary Dore, and erected a monument to her memory.

The Phantom Pond

THE following story of a Shropshire haunting was told me by Mrs. Dale,¹ a friend of my mother.

When a girl, in the sixties of the last century, she was invited to stay a few days with her friends, the Dentons, who lived in a country house in Shropshire. When she arrived there she found only Mrs. Denton at home; the two girls, Enid and Maud, had been summoned to Shrewsbury to the deathbed of one of their aunts.

After luncheon, as the weather was fine and warm, Mrs. Dale took a book from one of the bookcases and went into the large garden to read, and at the same time to enjoy the fragrant country air that was such a pleasant contrast to the stuffy atmosphere of the overcrowded city in which she lived.

Strolling along a narrow path, bordered on either side by flowers and bushes, she came to a summer-house covered with clematis and honeysuckle. The interior of it was not as charming as the exterior. It was very dirty and cobwebby, and badly wanted cleaning. It was evidently not a favourite resort of the Dentons.

Mrs. Dale took a chair from a pile of flower-pots and garden tools, dusted it as well as she could with a rag, and carried it to a tree, the wide-spreading branches of which afforded a shade from the sun. For a time she read and then, tired after her long journey and rendered drowsy by the heat, she dozed.

She awoke with a start to hear footsteps and see, coming along the narrow path, a tall, slender girl in an old-fashioned dark dress, accompanied by a little, pale, fair-haired boy. The girl had dark hair and eyes, was prepossessing, and from her appearance might have been a servant or dressmaker. She crossed the lawn, passed close to Mrs. Dale, and approached a

¹ All names in this story are fictitious.

pond, which Mrs. Dale noticed for the first time, although it was only a short distance from her. When the girl got to the pond, she clasped the boy in her arms, and jumped with him into the pond, and sank out of sight.

For some moments Mrs. Dale remained in the chair too shocked to move. Pulling herself together she sprang up and ran to the pond, or rather to the place where she had seen a pond, for to her amazement there was no longer a pond there. Not a trace of one, but only a flower-bed.

She returned to her seat with the intention of reading.

It was of no use. She could not concentrate on the book; she kept conjuring up a vision of the prepossessing girl in the quaint old-world-dress and the little fair-haired boy.

When the Denton girls came home she told them her strange experience in the garden. They were very interested, and said that when their mother bought the house she was told that it was alleged to be haunted but that did not trouble her as neither she nor they believed in ghosts.

Since they had been there, however, they had, from time to time, experienced an uncanny sensation when they were near the flower-bed that she mentioned. They had spoken about it to the Blacks, the former occupants of the house, who told them that on several occasions they had seen the apparitions of a girl in an old-fashioned dress and a little boy in various parts of the grounds, and that when they first came to the house they had heard a servant girl had drowned herself and her son in the pond in the garden many years ago, and that their ghosts were rumoured to haunt the place.

In the hope of terminating the haunting the Blacks had had the pond drained and a flower-bed made on its site.

Ghostly Horrors of the Dartmoor Rivers

FEW moors in Great Britain are as haunted as Dartmoor is reputed to be. There is the ghost of a Lady Howard who, on account of her alleged sins, was doomed to haunt the road from Tavistock to Oakhampton in the form of a huge black hound. Then there are the Yeth or Yell Hounds that tear over the wild moorland, followed by a tall, dark spectral figure on horseback with a hunting-pole in his hand and a horn slung round his neck. He is known as 'The Master' and also 'The Devil'. An apparition, known locally as Bingie, is said to haunt Cranmere Pool, the source of the Tavy, on Dartmoor. Bingie is supposed to be the ghost of a man named Benjamin Geare, who for his bad deeds was doomed to haunt the pool.

After the drowning of Sir John Fitz in the River Tavy, the pool in which his body was found was rumoured to be haunted by his ghost. He was supposed to have committed suicide after killing Gamaliel Slanning in a duel. Pixies haunt various parts of Dartmoor, and phantom houses have been stated to appear on the moor from time to time.

When I was a boy I spent one summer holiday in Chagford, and was fishing one morning on Dartmoor when a keeper asked me if I had a license. I answered in the negative and told him that I did not know I had to have one. He was quite nice and said I might stay there that day if I promised to get a license before I fished there again. I procured a license without delay, and the next time I met him on the moor I showed it him. We became great friends and he told me many stories of weird happenings on the moor.

On one occasion he was talking to a man who was fishing in the Dart, when the man pointed to a spot on the opposite bank of the river, a little distance from where they were standing, and said: 'There is something deuced queer about

that fellow, he gives me the shivers. He looks terribly ill and is as pale as a ghost.'

The keeper looked in the direction the speaker indicated, but did not see anyone. Knowing the strange things that happened on the moor, he asked the speaker to describe the person, and the description the speaker gave of the queer individual tallied exactly with that of a man whose dead body had been found in the river a few months previously. The Dart was much swollen at the time, and the man was thought to have lost his way in one of the dense mists that frequently occur on the moor, and to have fallen into the river and been drowned.

The fisherman had barely finished describing the man he saw when he exclaimed: 'Why, the fellow has disappeared! He must have tumbled into the river, for I can't see him anywhere.'

He peered into the water, which was not more than two or three feet deep, for, for a wonder, no rain had fallen for several days, but there was no sign of the queer individual. He gave up searching at last, and came to the conclusion that the man who looked like a ghost really had been a ghost.

On another occasion the keeper was walking with a friend by the Dart when he suddenly felt very cold, although the weather was extremely warm. At the same time his friend clutched his arm and said: 'Something dreadful is going to happen to me. My dead father is standing in the river looking at me.' The keeper saw no one in the river. His friend met with a fatal accident within the next few days.

I asked the keeper if he had ever seen a ghost on Dartmoor, and he told me that he had seen what he believed to have been one. He said he was crossing the moor one afternoon when a very tall, nude figure bounded by him into the Dart, which was shallow at the time, and vanished. It was very thin, with long arms and legs and a round head. It went too fast for him to see its face. He got the impression that it was very strange. It was some days before the keeper recovered from the shock it gave him.

At Two Bridges, where I had tea one day, I was told a queer story about Wistman or Wiseman's Wood, which is on the acclivity of a steep hill and forms one side of a valley through which the western branch of the Dart flows. It is supposed to have been one of the many sacred groves used by Druids in which to celebrate their mystic rites.

My informant told me that two ladies from London, who were staying in the neighbourhood of Two Bridges, told him that they were in Wistman Wood one afternoon, threading their way between the blocks of granite that lay scattered about, when a procession of tall, shadowy figures in white robes passed slowly by them, carrying in their midst on a kind of bier, the corpse of a man or woman. The faces of all the figures resembled the long dead. The procession descended to the Dart, which was full and in spate owing to recent heavy rain, and knelt down close beside the river. They were still kneeling and apparently praying when they gradually faded away and disappeared.

The same ladies had a tale to tell about Kitt's Hole, or Pool, near Lidford. They were standing in some spot above the Hole, gazing down at the waterfall of the Lid one day, when they saw the shadowy figure of a woman in a shawl, standing close beside the basin at the foot of the fall. She was holding what looked like a basket, and did not appear to mind being sprayed with water. Suddenly she toppled forward and fell into the pool.

Much alarmed, the ladies were hastening to get assistance, fearing the poor woman would be drowned, when they met an elderly man. They told him about the woman, and he said: 'There is no need to fear about her being drowned. People can't be drowned twice. What you saw was the ghost of an old woman called Kitty who haunts the waterfall. The hole at the foot of it is named after her. Kitty was returning home from the market one dark, stormy night many years ago when she fell into the hole and was drowned.'

A Norfolk Millpond Mystery

EARLY one autumn afternoon, towards the end of the last century, Miss Smith and Miss Raven, fashion designers of a well-known firm in London, set out from a village in the valley of the Bure, Norfolk, for a tramp into the neighbouring country. Both girls—for they were only girls—were typically modern; that is to say, they were bonny and athletic, and, despite the sedentary nature of their vocation, extremely fond of outdoor life. Miss Raven, the elder of the two, was nice-looking without perhaps being actually pretty; but Miss Smith was undeniably a beauty. Had she been a lady of title or an actress, all the society papers would have been full of her. She did not, however, crave for notoriety; she was quite content with the homage of most of the young men whom she knew, and the unspoken admiration of many men whom she did not know, but who looked at her out of doors or sat near to her in theatres and restaurants.

She was much attached to Miss Raven, and as the two strode along, swinging their arms, their tongues wagged merrily and without intermission. On and on, down one hill and up another, past wood and brook and hamlet they went, till a gradual fading of the light warned them it was about time to think of turning back.

‘We must go as far as that old ruin,’ Miss Raven said, pointing to a tumbledown white building that nestled close to a winding stream. ‘I’ve never seen anything quite so picturesque.’

‘And I’ve never seen anything quite so weird,’ Miss Smith replied. ‘I’m not at all sure I like it. Besides, I’m desperately thirsty. I want my tea. We’d much better go home.’

They had an argument, and it was eventually agreed that they should go on—but not beyond a certain point. ‘Not an inch farther, mind,’ Miss Smith said, ‘or I’ll turn back and leave you.’

The ruin lay in a hollow, and as the two girls descended the slope leading to it, a mist rose from the ground as if to greet them. They quickened their steps, and, approaching nearer, perceived a mill-wheel, the barest skeleton, crowned with moss and ferns, and dripping with slime. The pool, into which it dripped, was overgrown in places with reeds and chick-weed, but was singularly bare and black in the centre, and suggestive of very great depths. Weeping willows bordered the stream, and their sloping, stunted forms were gradually growing more and more indistinct in the oncoming mist.

The space in front of the house, once, no doubt, a prettily cultivated garden, was now full of rank grass and weeds, and dotted here and there with unsightly mounds consisting of fallen bricks and mortar. Some of these mounds, long, low, and narrow, were unpleasantly suggestive of graves, whilst the atmosphere of the place, the leaden-hued and mystic atmosphere, charged to the utmost with the smell of decayed trees and mouldy walls, might well have been that of an ancient churchyard.

A sense of insufferable gloom, utterly different from any they had ever before experienced, took possession of the two girls.

‘This place depresses me horribly. I don’t know when I’ve felt so sad,’ Miss Smith observed. ‘It’s very stupid of me, I know, but I can’t help thinking some great tragedy must have taken place here.’

‘I feel rather like that too,’ Miss Raven responded. ‘I’ve never seen such dreariness. Do you see those shadows on the water? How strange they are! There’s nothing that I can see to account for them. There’s certainly nothing the least like them in the sedge. There are none anywhere else. Look! Oh, do look! They are changing. They are completely different now. See, I’ll throw a stone at them.’ Her throw, missing its mark, was so characteristically girlish that Miss Smith laughed. Miss Raven threw again, and this time a deep plomb announced her success. ‘There,’ she cried triumphantly. ‘Now do you see it?’

‘I see something,’ Miss Smith answered. Then, with sudden

eagerness: 'Yes, you are right. The shadows are continually changing. They seem to separate themselves from the sedge, and fall like live things into the pool. By the way, the pool seems to be growing darker and bigger. I don't like the place at all. For heaven's sake let's get away from it!'

Miss Raven, however, was too fascinated. Stepping carefully, so as to avoid the mud and long grass, she went right up to the pool and peered into it.

'How fearfully deep and still it is,' she said. 'What a beastly place to end one's days in.' Then she gave a sudden cry 'Aileen! Here! Come here, quick!'

Miss Smith hastened up to her. 'What is it?' she said. 'How you frightened me!'

Miss Raven pointed excitedly at the water. It was no longer tranquil. The chick-weed round the edges began to oscillate, white bubbles formed in the centre, and then, quite suddenly, the entire surface became a seething, hissing, rushing, roaring whirlpool, which commenced rising in the most hideous and menacing manner. Seizing Miss Raven by the arm, Miss Smith dragged her back, and the two fled in terror. The fog, however, was so thick that they missed their way. They failed to strike the road, and, instead, found themselves plunging deeper and deeper into a fearful quagmire of mud and the rankest compound of rushes, weeds, and grass.

They were just despairing of ever extricating themselves when Miss Smith felt a light tap on her shoulder and, swinging round, was almost startled out of her senses at the sight of a very white face glaring at her. Miss Raven, noticing that her companion had stopped, also turned round; and she too received a shock. The face she saw was so very white; the eyes, intently fixed on Miss Smith, so strangely luminous; the head, covered with red, shaggy hair, so disproportionately large; and the figure, that of a hunchback youth, as a whole so extraordinarily grotesque.

He made no sound, but, signing to them to follow him, he began to move away with a queer, shambling gait. The girls, thankful enough to have found a guide, however strange, kept

close at his heels, and soon found themselves once again on the roadway. Here their conductor came to a halt, and producing from under his coat what looked like a lady's reticule, he was about to thrust it into Miss Smith's hand when their eyes met and, to her intense astonishment, he uttered a bitter cry of disappointment and vanished. His action and disappearance were so inexplicable that the girls, completely demoralized, took to their heels and ran without stopping till the ruins were far in their rear, and they were well on their way home.

They related their experience to the people with whom they were staying, and were then told for the first time that the ruin was well known to be haunted. 'Nothing will persuade any of the villagers to visit the mill pond after dusk,' their hostess remarked, 'especially at this time of the year, when they declare the water suddenly rises and follows them. The place has a most sinister reputation, and certainly several people to my knowledge have committed suicide there. The last to do so was Davy Dyer, the hunchback, whose ghost you must have just seen. His was rather a sad case, as I have good reason to know. Would you like to hear it?'

The girls eagerly assented, and their hostess told them as follows:

'Ten years ago there stood on the spot you visited this afternoon a very picturesque house called the Gyp Mill. It was then extremely old, and as its foundations were faulty, it was thought a severe storm would sooner or later completely demolish it. Partly for this reason, and partly because the mill pool was said to be haunted, it stood for a long time untenanted. At last it was taken by a widow named Dyer. Mrs. Dyer was quite a superior kind of person. She had at one time, I believe, kept a fairly good-class girls' school in Bury St. Edmunds, but losing her connection through illness, she had been obliged to think of some other means of gaining a livelihood. When she came to the Gyp Mill she cultivated the garden and sold its produce; provided teas for picnic parties in the summer; and let out rooms, chiefly to artists.

'She had one son, Davy, a very intelligent boy of about

eighteen, but hopelessly deformed. He was not only hunch-backed but he had an abnormally large head; and what was quite unpardonable in the eyes of the village children, who tormented him shamefully, a mass of the brightest red hair.

'Well, one day, a girl whom I will call Beryl Denver, came to stay with me. Beryl was extremely pretty and horribly spoilt. She had gone on the stage against her parents' wishes and had been an immediate success. At the time I am speaking of she had just had an offer of marriage from a duke, and it was to hear what I had to say about it—for I am, I think, the only person from whom she ever asks advice—that she was paying me this visit. After being with me three days, however, and changing her mind with regard to the duke's offer at least a dozen times, she suddenly announced that she must seek some more countrified place to stay in. "I want to go right away from everywhere," she said, "so that I can forget—forget that there is such a place as London. Don't you know of any pretty cottage or picturesque old farm, near here, that I could stay at?"

'I suggested the Gyp Mill, and she started off at once to look at it.

'She came back full of enthusiasm. "It's a delightful spot," she said. "I'm glad I went to see it, the flowers are lovely, and the old woman's a dear, but I couldn't stay there. I couldn't stand that hunchback son of hers. His white face and big dark eyes alarmed me horribly. I don't think it's at all right he should be at large."

' "Poor Davy," I remarked. "His appearance is certainly against him, but I can assure you he is absolutely harmless. I know him well."

'Beryl shook her head. "You know my views, Auntie," she said (she always calls me Auntie although I am not related to her in any way). "All ugly people have a kink of badness in them somewhere. They must be either cruel, or spiteful, or treacherous, or, in some way or other, evilly disposed. I am quite certain that looks reflect the mind. No, I couldn't endure that boy. I can't stay there."

'In the morning, however, as I had fully anticipated, she

changed her mind. A fly was sent for, and she drove off to the Gyp Mill, taking all her luggage with her. How Mrs. Dyer ever got it up her narrow staircase I can't think, but she must have managed it somehow, for Beryl stayed and, contrary to my expectations, for more than one night.

'Davy, she afterwards informed me, soon got on her nerves. Always when she went out she caught him covertly peeping at her from behind the window curtain of the little front parlour; and if ever she stood for a moment to chat with his mother, she could see him slyly watching her through a chink in the doorway. She had seldom, so far, met him out of doors; but as she was returning from a walk one afternoon she came across a group of village children shouting at and jostling someone very roughly in their midst, and approaching nearer saw that the object of their abuse was Davy, and that, in addition to pushing and pummelling him, they were tormenting him with stinging nettles—a very favourite device of the children in this district. Filled with disgust, rather than pity (Beryl, like most modern girls, is wanting in real sentiment, and in this instance simply hated to think that anyone could derive amusement from so ungainly a creature), she interfered.

'“You abominable little wretches!” she cried. “Leave him alone at once. Do you hear?”

'Had a bomb fallen the children could not have been more surprised. One or two of the boys were inclined to be rude, but on the rest the effect of Beryl's looks and clothes (the latter in particular) was magical. Gazing at her open-mouthed, they drew back and allowed Davy to continue on his way.

'After this, Davy peeped more than ever, and Beryl, losing patience, determined to put a stop to it. Catching him in the act of following her through the fields one morning, she turned on him in a fury.

'“How dare you?” she demanded. “How dare you annoy me like this? Go home at once.”

'“This is my home, lady,” Davy replied, his eyes on the ground and his cheeks crimson.

'“Then you must choose some other route,” Beryl retorted;

"and for goodness' sake don't be everlastingly looking at me. I can't stand it. No wonder those children rounded on you, you . . ." She was going to call him some very strong name, for Beryl, when roused, didn't stick at trifles, but suddenly checked herself. She began to realize that this queer, distorted little object was in love with her. Now no girl in London, probably, had more admirers than Beryl. Peers, politicians, authors, men of all vocations and classes had succumbed to her beauty, and she had deemed herself pretty well *blasé*. But here was a novelty. A poor, ostracized rustic hunchback—the incarnation of ugliness and simplicity. "You know how the horrible fascinates one," she said to me later. "For instance, a nasty tooth, or some other equally horrible defect in a person's face, which one keeps on looking at however much one tries not to. Well, it was a fascination of this kind that possessed me now. I felt I must see more of the hunchback and egg him on to the utmost."

'Apparently it was owing to this fascination that Beryl, changing her tactics, encouraged Davy to talk to her, and assuming an interest in the garden, which she knew was his one hobby, gradually drew him out. Very shy and embarrassed at first, he could only very briefly answer her questions; but soon deceived by her manner—for Beryl could act just as cleverly off the stage as on it—he grew bolder, and talked well on his favourite subject, natural history. He really knew a great deal, and Beryl, despite the fact that she could hardly tell the difference between a hollyhock and marigold, couldn't help being impressed.

'She walked home with him that day; and for days afterwards she was often to be seen in his company.

' "He'll miss you dreadfully when you go, ma'am," Mrs. Dyer said to her. "He thinks the world of you. He told me last night that he only wished he could do something to show you how grateful he is for your kindness to him." Of course, Mrs. Dyer did not say that Davy was in love, but Beryl knew it. She knew that to him she was a deified being and that he absolutely adored her. Thus matters stood, when a letter from the duke

made Beryl decided to leave Gyp Mill at once and return with all speed to London. She walked to the post-office to dispatch a telegram, and Davy went with her. Beryl knew that this would be the last time, in all probability, that she would ever walk with him; and feeling that she must find out how far his love for her had progressed she agreed to his proposal that they should return home by a rather longer route. He wished, he said, to show her a garden which was by far the prettiest in all the country round, and it would not take them more than a quarter of a mile or so out of their way. Of course Beryl looked upon this suggestion as a mere pretext on Davy's part for prolonging the walk, and she wondered whether he would say anything, or whether his passion would be held in check by his natural respect for her superior social position. She was disappointed. Although she saw love for her shining more brightly than ever in his eyes, he did not speak of it; he talked only of flowers and of the great beauties of nature. Bored to distraction, she at last cut him short, and, declaring that she had no time to waste, hurried on. It was not until they had reached home that she discovered that she had lost her reticule, containing not only a purse full of sovereigns but the letter she had just received from the duke. She distinctly remembered having it with her, she said, when Davy was prosing over the stupid flowers, and she supposed she must have left it somewhere in the garden, probably on the seat where they had sat for a few minutes.

'Davy, of course, went back at once to look for it, but when he returned an hour or so later and in crestfallen tones told her that he could not find it, her anger knew no bounds. She did not actually call him a fool, but she made him clearly understand she thought him one; and he set off again almost immediately to have another look for it. He did not come back this time till close on midnight, and he had not the courage to tell her of his failure. His mother did it for him. Beryl went away early the following morning, too indignant to shake hands with either Mrs. Dyer or her son. "If Davy didn't actually take the reticule," she wrote to me some days later, "it was all owing to him, to his bothering me to see that rotten garden, that I lost it;

but I firmly believe he has it. Ugly faces, you know, are indicative of ugly minds—of a bad kink somewhere.”

‘Of course the affair of the reticule soon became public property. It was advertised for in the local papers, and the woman in the post-office told everybody that she remembered seeing it in Beryl’s hand when she left the shop. “Davy,” she said, “was with Miss Denver at the time, and I particularly noticed that he walked very close to her and watched her in a peculiarly furtive manner.”’

‘The villagers, with whom the Dyers had always been unpopular, were not slow in taking up the cue, and consequently Davy, now waylaid by armies of children calling him thief, and even beating him, never had a moment’s peace.

‘At last he was found one morning in the mill-pond drowned, and it was generally believed that remorse for his sins had made him commit suicide. His mother alone thought otherwise. I did not see Beryl nor hear anything of her for at least two years after Davy’s death, when to my surprise she drove up to the door one day with her usual pile of luggage.

“Who is it this time?” I said, after we had exchanged greetings. “The duke again?”

“Oh dear no,” Beryl replied. “I broke it off definitely with him long ago. He was too boring for words, always dangling after me and never letting me go out with anyone else. If he had been tolerably good looking I might have stood it, but he wasn’t. He was hopelessly plain. However, I made some use of him, and he certainly gave me good presents. I have been engaged several times since, and I’ve come now to ask your advice about the Earl of C——’s eldest son. Shall I marry him or not? Do you think he’s worth it?”

‘I did not answer her at once, but let her ramble on, till she suddenly turned to me and said: “Do you remember the last time I was here? Two years ago! You know I stayed at that delightful old mill house, the Gyp something, and lost my reticule. Well, I found it some time afterwards in my hat-box. I hadn’t taken it out with me that day after all. And I could have sworn I had. Wasn’t it funny?”’

“Extraordinary, perhaps,” I remarked, with rather more severity in my voice than I had ever used to her before, “but hardly funny.” And I was about to relate to her all that had occurred in the interim, when something checked me. After all, I thought, it would be just as well for this spoilt, heartless little London actress to go to the Gyp Mill and find out for herself.

“Oh, I suppose I ought to have written to the people and let them know,” she said carelessly, “but I was really too busy. I always have such lots to do. Such heaps of correspondence to attend to, and so many visits to make. If it’s a fine day tomorrow I’ll walk over and explain.”

‘I did not, of course, expect Beryl would go, but greatly to my surprise, soon after luncheon she came into my bedroom in her hat and coat. “I’m off,” she said. “I think the walk will do me good. And, look here, don’t wait dinner for me, because in all probability I’ll stay the night. It all depends upon how I feel. If I’m not back by eight you need not expect me till tomorrow. Bye-bye.”

‘She stole to my side and kissed me, and, armed with an umbrella and mackintosh, set off up the street. I watched her till she turned the corner. Then I lay down and wondered what sort of a reception she would meet with at the hands of Mrs. Dyer. As the afternoon waned the sky grew ominously dark, and the wind rose. Presently big drops of rain spluttered against the window, and there was every indication of a very severe storm. Had Beryl been on good terms with Mrs. Dyer my mind would have been at rest, as she would have been able to take refuge at the Mill, but knowing Mrs. Dyer’s feelings towards her, I doubted very much if Mrs. Dyer would allow her to set foot within the house; and she would have some distance to walk before she could reach another shelter.

‘Down came the rain in grim earnest, and that night witnessed the worst storm Norfolk had known for many years. Beryl did not return. I sat up till twelve wondering what had become of her, for despite this wayward child’s many faults, I was much attached to her—and slept very little for the rest of

the night. In the morning my maid came into my room in a breathless state of excitement.

“Oh, Mum,” she exclaimed, “the storm has destroyed half Norfolk.” (This, of course, I knew to be an exaggeration.) “What do you think! Simkins’ Stores is blowed down, nearly all the chimney-pots are off in Fore Street, and the milkman has just told me the Gyp Mill is under water and Mrs. Dyer is drowned!”

“What!” I shrieked. “The Gyp Mill under water! Are you sure? Miss Denver was staying there last night. Call a cab—I must go there at once.”

The maid flew; and I was feverishly scrambling into my clothes, when, to my utmost relief, in walked Beryl.

“So you’ve heard,” she said, looking rather pale, but otherwise quite composed. “The Gyp Mill valley is under water, and old Mrs. Dyer is drowned. It was rather lucky for me that I didn’t go there after all, wasn’t it? Quite a narrow escape, in fact.”

“Thank God, you’re safe!” I exclaimed, drawing her into my arms and kissing her frantically. “Tell me all about it.”

“Oh, there isn’t much to tell,” she said. “When I got a mile or two on the road I found I had quite forgotten the way, so I enquired of the first person I met, a labourer, and he said, ‘When you come to the duck-pond bear sharply to your left’. Well, I trudged on and on, and I am sure I must have gone miles, but no duck-pond, and I was beginning to despair of ever seeing it, when a sudden swerve in the road revealed it to me. The sky was very dark and threatening, and the wind—you know how I detest wind—sorely tried my temper. It was perfectly fiendish. Well, when I got to the pond I found there were two roads and I had quite forgotten which of them I had to take. I was standing there shivering, feeling horribly bored, when to my joy a figure suddenly hove in view. It had grown so dark that I could not make out whether the stranger was a man or a woman. Besides, I couldn’t see a face at all, only a short, squat body clad in some sort of ill-fitting fustian garment. I shouted out, ‘Can you tell me the way to the Gyp Mill?’ but

could get no reply. The strange creature simply put out one hand, and taking the road to the right, beckoned to me to follow. Then I suddenly remembered that the other person, the labouring man, had told me to take the road to the left, and I ran after the curious-looking individual shouting: 'The Gyp Mill! Do you hear! I want to go to the Gyp Mill! Mrs. Dyer's!' Again I got no response, but the hand waved me on more vigorously than before.

"It was now so dark that I could hardly see where I was treading, and the wind was so strong that I had the greatest difficulty in keeping my feet. I battled on, however, and after what seemed to me an eternity, we eventually stopped outside a building that showed a twinkling light in one of the windows. My conductor opened a wicket gate and, signing to me to follow, walked me up a narrow winding path to the front door. Here he halted and, turning suddenly round on me, showed his face. It was the Dyer boy—Davy, I think they called him. Davy the hunchback." Here Beryl paused.

"Are you quite sure?" I asked.

"Absolutely," she replied. "I couldn't mistake him. There he was, with his hunchback, huge head, cheeks looking whiter than ever, and red hair. How I could see that it was red in the dark I can't tell you, but all the same I could, and moreover, the colour was very clear and distinct. Well, he stood and looked at me for some seconds beseechingly, and then said something, but so quickly I couldn't catch what it was. I told him so, and he repeated it, jabber, jabber, jabber. Then I grew angry. 'Why have you brought me here?' I shouted. 'I wanted to go to the Gyp Mill.' He spoke again in the same incomprehensible way, and holding out his hands as if to implore my forgiveness, suddenly disappeared. Where he went to is a mystery. The rain had now begun to fall in torrents, and to attempt to go on was madness. Consequently, I rapped at the door and asked the woman who opened it if she could put me up for the night. 'Yes, miss,' she said. 'We have a spare room, if you don't mind its being rather small. The gentleman that has been staying here left this morning. Did anyone recommend you?' 'Mr.

Dyer brought me here,' I said, 'and I believe he is somewhere outside.' 'Mr. Dyer!' the woman exclaimed, looking at me in the oddest manner. 'I don't know a Mr. Dyer. Who do you mean?' 'Why, Davy Dyer,' I replied, 'the son of the old woman who lives at the Mill. Davy Dyer, the hunchback.'

'“Then, to my amazement, the woman caught me by the arm. ‘Davy Dyer, the hunchback!’ she cried. ‘Why, miss, you must either be dreaming or mad. Davy Dyer drowned himself in the Mill pool two years ago’.”¹

¹ All names in this story, which is founded on fact, are fictitious.

The Headless Woman of the Churnet

IN the valley of the Churnet, and not very far from the banks of that sinuous river, is another hollow that was at one time rumoured to be haunted. It lies between the villages of Dove-ridge and Sudbury, on the road connecting them with Derby.

A stream running into the Churnet crosses it, and on either side of it are high banks crowned with hedges. Behind the hedges are trees, whose wide-spreading branches almost meet above the roadway.

On a hot summer's day, the spot may be described as pleasantly shady, but at night time, and even on an autumn or winter's afternoon, it is depressing, and one is glad to move away from it as quickly as possible.

About the middle of the last century a waggoner had the following strange experience there. He had gone to a fair at Derby and it was late when he set out on his homeward journey. At the bottom of the cart was a quantity of straw that had been used for packing cheese. He sat down on it and made himself as comfortable as he could. The mare knew the road well and, being anxious to get home, stepped out at a brisk pace.

Being very tired the eternal rattle, rattle of the wheels and clatter, clatter of the mare's hoofs, seemed to have a soothing effect on him, and he eventually fell asleep.

He awoke with a violent start, just in time to prevent the reins being torn from his grasp by the mare, who had apparently taken fright at something and was shying for all she was worth. Maintaining his seat with difficulty he looked round and saw at a glance he was in the hollow—the hollow already described.

But what attracted his attention at once and made his heart almost stand still with horror was a tall figure standing on the bank on one side of the road. The moonlight poured down

on it through a parting of the great gnarled branches overhead and rendered every detail terribly distinct.

It was the figure of a woman, but a woman without a head. Where the head should have been was merely space, the trunk terminating in a protuberance of neck.

All this he took in at a glance, but ere he had time to observe more the mare bolted, and when she assumed a normal trot again the hollow was some miles in the rear, and he could see the Churnet gleaming like polished silver in the far distance.¹

¹ Vide *Empire News*, February 1929.

The Head

A Derbyshire Pretty Ghost

SOME few years ago two men were trudging along a road in Derbyshire, swearing heartily. It was not the first time they had sworn, not by any means, but it is extremely doubtful if either of them had ever sworn before quite so vehemently. There were, one must admit, extenuating circumstances. Having missed the last train, they were obliged to walk home a distance of twelve or more miles, and having been overtaken by a rainstorm they were soaked to the skin. True, the rain had now ceased, but as they had covered only six miles they still had six more to go, and at every step they took the water in their boots soaked through their socks and squelched between their toes. Just as they arrived at a spot where the road swerved a little to their left and took a sudden dip, a clock from a distance solemnly chimed twelve.

The younger of the two men came to a halt and lighted his pipe. 'Hold on a minute, Brown,' he shouted; 'I can't keep up this infernal pace any longer. Let's take an easy.'

Brown turned and joined his companion, who had seated himself on a wooden gate. Below them, in the dip, the darkness was sepulchral. The hedges on either side of the road were of immense height; and high above them rose the trunks of giant pines and larches, the intertwining branches of which formed an archway that completely obliterated the sky. A faint speck of light from afar flickered occasionally, as if through a gap in the foliage, but, apart from this, the men could see nothing—nothing but blackness.

'A cheerful spot!' Brown remarked, 'as gloomy a bit of road as I've ever seen. And how quiet!'

The other man blew his nose. 'Not so quiet now,' he laughed, 'but how everything echoes! What's that? Water?'

Both men looked, and apparently from the other side of the hedge came the gentle gurgle of quick-flowing water. There was something so eerie in the sound that both men shivered.

'Must be a spring,' Brown said, 'flowing into a stream close to us. The darkness and eeriness of this spot suggests the Styx. I'm sure it is badly haunted. A match, if you please, Reynolds.'

Reynolds gave him one, and for a while the two men puffed away in silence.

Suddenly something whizzed overhead; and they heard the prolonged, dismal hooting of an owl.

'This is getting a bit too eerie, even for my liking, Brown,' Reynolds remarked; 'supposing we move on. I always associate noises like that with a death.'

'I wish it were my mother-in-law's,' Brown laughed, 'or my own. But there's no such luck. I'm cold.'

'So am I,' Reynolds replied. 'Deuced cold! Come on, do!'

He slid off the gate as he spoke and strode into the centre of the road.

The moon, temporarily unveiled, revealed as wet a landscape as one could possibly imagine. Everything dripped water—bushes, trees, ferns, grass, hats, clothes—whilst every rut of the road, every particle of soil, shone wet in the moon's rays. A deep, settled calm permeated the atmosphere. It was the stillness of night and moisture combined.

'What's the matter? Aren't you coming?' Brown asked impatiently.

'One moment,' Reynolds replied. 'I believe I heard footsteps. Hark! I thought so, they're coming this way! Someone else lost their train, perhaps.'

Brown listened, and he, too, distinctly heard the sound of footsteps—high-heeled shoes walking along with a sharp, springy action, as if the road were absolutely hard and dry.

‘A woman!’ he ejaculated. ‘Odd hour for a woman to be out here.’

Brown laughed. ‘Pooh!’ he said. ‘Women are afraid of nothing nowadays except old age. Hullo! Here she comes!’

As he spoke the figure of a woman—slight and supple, and apparently young—shot into view, and came rapidly towards them.

Her dress, though quaint and pretty, was not particularly striking; but her feet, clad in patent leather shoes, with buckles that shone brightly in the moonlight, were oddly conspicuous, in spite of the fact that they were small and partially hidden beneath a skirt which was long and frilled, and not at all in accordance with the present fashion. Something about her prevented both men from speaking, and they involuntarily moved nearer to one another as she approached. On and on she came, tripping along, and never varying her pace. Now in a zone of moonlight, now in the dark belt of shadows from the firs and larches, she drew nearer and nearer. Through the hedge, Brown could dimly perceive the figure of a cow, immensely magnified, standing dumb and motionless, apparently lost, like he was, in spellbound observation. The silence kept on intensifying. Not a breath of air, not a leaf stirring, not a sound from Reynolds, who stood with arms folded like a statue; only the subdued trickle, trickle of the spring, and the hard tap, tap, tap of the flashing, sparkling shoes.

At last the woman was abreast of them. They shrank back and back, pressing farther and farther into the hedge, so close that the sharp twigs and brambles scratched their faces and tore their clothes. She passed. Down, down, down, still tripping daintily, until the sepulchral blackness of the dip swallowed her up. They could still hear her tap, tap tap; and for some seconds neither spoke. Then Reynolds, releasing his clothes from the thorns, muttered huskily, ‘At last I’ve seen a ghost, and I always scoffed at them.’

‘But her head!’ Brown ejaculated, ‘Where was it?’

‘Don’t ask me,’ Reynolds replied, his teeth chattering. ‘She had no head. At least I didn’t see any. Dare you go on?’

'What, down there?' Brown said, nodding in the direction of the dip.

'Well, we must, if we are to get home tonight,' Reynolds retorted, 'and I'm frozen.'

'Wait till that noise ceases, then,' Brown answered. 'I can't stand seeing a thing like that twice in one night.'

They stood still and listened, until the tapping gradually died away in the far distance, and the only sound to be heard was that of the water, the eternal, never ceasing, never varying sound of the water. Then they ran—ran as they had never run since long ago Rugby days—down through the inky darkness of the hollow and out—far out into the brightness of the great stretch of flat country beyond; and, all the time they ran, they neither looked to the right nor to the left, but always on the ground just ahead of them.

.

For a week the horror of what they had seen was so great that neither of the two men could bear to be alone in the dark; and they kept a light in their respective rooms all night. Then a strange thing happened. Brown became infatuated, he did nothing but rave, all day, about the ghost. She had the prettiest figure, the whitest hands, the daintiest feet he had ever seen, and he was sure her face must be equally lovely. Why couldn't he see it? There was nothing about the neck to show she had been decapitated, and yet the head was missing. Why?

He worried Reynolds to death about it, and he gave no one any peace. That waist, those delicate white fingers, those rosy, almond-shaped nails, those scintillating shoe buckles! They got on his brain. They obsessed him. He was like a maniac.

At last, at the suggestion of Reynolds, who wanted to get rid of him for a while, he went to London and paid visits to most of the professional mediums and occultists in the West End.

Some advised him one thing, and some another. Some immediately went into trances and learned from their control-

ling spirits all about the headless phantom, who she was, why she paraded the high road, and what had become of her head. No two told him alike, and the head he so longed to see had at least a dozen different hiding places.

He contacted at last a medium who, for a moderate fee, agreed to hold a séance in the place where they had seen the ghost. He closed with the offer.

When the night fixed for the séance arrived, the weather conditions were all that could be desired; the air was soft and calm, the moon brilliant, the sky almost cloudless, and promising only the finest weather for days to come. As the medium insisted on a party of at least four, Brown persuaded a Mr. and Mrs. Roscovi, Russians, to come, and they all set out together shortly after ten o'clock. Brown had made many enquiries in the neighbourhood as to the phantom figure, but he had only come across two people who would tell him anything about it. One, a farmer, assured him that he had on several occasions seen the ghost when driving, and that on each occasion it had kept abreast of his horse, even though the latter was careering along the road half mad with fright. But what terrified him most, he said, was that the apparition had no head.

The other, a blacksmith, said he had seen the woman twice, and that each time he had seen her she had been carrying something tucked under her arm, which he had fancied was a head. But he had been too scared to look at it very closely, and he only knew for certain that where her head should have been there was nothing. Both he and the farmer said they had heard all their lives that the road was haunted, but for what reason they had never been able to discover, as within the past sixty years, at any rate, neither murder nor suicide was known to have taken place near the hollow. This is as far as Brown had got with his investigations when he set out on the night in question. The Roscovis did not think for one moment that the ghost would appear. They said, few people apparently had seen it; its visits in all probability were only periodical; and weeks, months, or even years might elapse before it put in an appearance there again.

'That may be, but then we have a medium,' Brown argued. 'I engaged her to invoke the ghost, provided it would not come of its own accord. You can invoke it, can't you, Madame Valenspin?'

Madame Valenspin now seemed rather dubious. 'I have never tried in the open before,' she said, with a slight shiver, 'but I will do my best. The conditions seem favourable; but I can't say definitely till we arrive at the exact spot.'

Brown, however, could not help observing that the farther they advanced into the country, which became more and more lonely, the more restless and uneasy Madame Valenspin grew.

Once or twice she halted, as if irresolute whether to go on or not, and the moment she caught sight of the hollow she came to a dead stop.

'Not down there,' she said, 'it's too dark. We'd better stay here.'

The silence was only broken by the gurgling of the spring which sounded more eerie than ever. Behind it, away back in the broad expanse of field, were cattle, their skins startlingly white; all motionless, and all in attitudes suggestive of a sense of anticipation, of a conscious waiting for something. The sepulchral hush was uninterrupted save by bats, assuredly the biggest and blackest Brown had ever seen, wheeling and skimming, with the faintest perceptible whiz, whiz, whiz in and out of the larches; and the soft intermittent fanning of the leaves as the night breeze came rustling over the flat country and continued its career down into the hollow. A rabbit scurried across the road from one gate to another, its white breast shining silver, and some other small furry creature, of a species undetected, created a brief pandemonium in a neighbouring ditch. Otherwise all nature was extraordinarily passive.

'The figure went right down into the hollow,' Brown said. 'I think we ought to try there. What do you think, Mrs. Roscovi?'

'I am of the same opinion as Madame Valenspin,' Mrs.

Roscovi replied, glancing apprehensively at the dip. 'I think we had better stay where we are.'

'Very well, then,' Brown said, 'let's begin. You are mistress of the ceremonies, Madam Valenspin. Will you tell us what to do?'

For a minute everyone was silent. Madame Valenspin was ghastly pale. She moved to one side of the road.

'Many years ago,' she said, in a voice strangely unlike her own, 'a ghastly crime was committed in the hollows. Two sisters in love with the same man met there one day. They quarrelled, and in the struggle that ensued one sister pushed the other into the stream. She was swept away and drowned. The murderess, who was never suspected, lived for many years after the cruel deed. On her death she was doomed to haunt the scene of the crime. Prepare for a shock.'

She ceased speaking. Hardly had she done so when from the hollow came the eerie sound of footsteps: a measured tap, tap, tap on the hard ground. Everyone became tense and listened with bated breath. The tapping grew more and more audible, and presently there emerged from the gloom and shadows of the dip the same dainty figure that Brown and Reynolds had seen on the previous occasion.

'It is she! It is she!' Brown exclaimed excitedly. 'The slim waist, the slender arms, those lovely hands, and shoes with the buckles. How they sparkle! I must see her head! I will see it!'

An exclamation of horror interrupted him. It was from Mr. Roscovi. He had moved to one side of the road, dragging his wife with him, and the two were standing huddled together, their eyes fixed in a frenzied stare at the phantom's neck. Brown, forcing his attention away from the long, slim hands which so fascinated him, followed their glances. The neck was not as he remembered it, white and slender as far as it went, but it ended abruptly in a grey nothingness, and beyond this nothingness Brown fancied he discerned the dimmest of shadows. He was appalled but fascinated, and intense curiosity far outweighed his fear. He was certain she was beautiful—

beautiful to a degree that immeasurably excelled any feminine loveliness he had hitherto encountered. He must see her face. He did not believe her head was missing; he believed it was there on her body right enough, but that for some specific reason it had not materialized. He turned to Madame Valenspin to enquire the cause, and was greatly astonished to see her beating a hasty retreat across the fields. The figure had now come up to where he was standing and, tripping past him, it sped swiftly down the dip.

Brown at once gave chase. He had not gone many yards before the darkness of the dip was on him; and the only clue he had to his quarry's whereabouts was the sound of the shoes—the constant tap, tap, tapping. On and on he went, however, and at length, emerging from the darkness, he perceived a wooden stile and beyond it a tiny path, threading its way through a clump of firs that gradually grew thinner and thinner till they finally terminated in what appeared to be a broad clearing. Mounting the stile and springing off on the other side, the woman tripped along the path, and, turning for a moment to beckon Brown, disappeared from view.

The intense loneliness of the spot, emphasized a thousand-fold by the eerie effect of the few straggling moonbeams that fell aslant the stile and pathway, and the knowledge that he had left his companions far behind made Brown falter, and it was some seconds before he could gather up the courage to continue his pursuit. A light girlish laugh, however, proceeding apparently from the spot where the figure had vanished, determined him. He saw once again vividly before him that willowy waist, those slim, delicate fingers, and those coquettish little feet. Were the devil itself to bar his way he must see her face. Sweating with terror, and yet withal obsessed with a passion that defies description, Brown mounted the stile and hastened in the direction of the laugh. Again it rung out, charged to overflowing with innocent fun and frolic, irresistibly girlish, irresistibly coy. This time it came from behind a clump of trees bordering on the dip stream.

Wild with excitement, mad with love, Brown rushed by the

trees and abruptly halted. Floating in the air over the stream was the head he had longed to see. Hair, nose and mouth were lovely, but not the eyes, because there were no eyes—just empty, gaping, glittering cavities.

As Brown stood staring at the ghastly spectacle, aghast, there was a girlish giggle.¹

¹ All names in this story, which is founded on fact, are fictitious.

Seen in a Mirror

LOOKING in one of my old note-books—I have very many—I came across two accounts of visions in a mirror. The first was told me, as long ago as 1893, by Mr. Peter Hill, a septuagenarian friend of one of my Dublin tutors.

I give it as nearly as I can in his own words. It is as follows :

‘Many years ago I accepted an invitation from my old friend, Horace Boulter, to spend a few days with him at Firley Hall, in Yorkshire. I arrived at the house on New Year’s Eve. It was a long, rambling building, dating back to the sixteenth century, covered all over, even to the chimneys, with ivy. It stood in a hollow and was overtopped by great trees. Viewed in the waning daylight it looked ghostly enough, and as the carriage that had been sent to bring me from the station stopped at the front door, I was conscious of a feeling of loneliness and great depression. The feeling vanished, however, the moment that I entered the house and heard Boulter’s cheerful voice greeting me.

‘We had a jolly little dinner, after which we sat in the study and talked over old times. In the course of our conversation I remarked that an old house like Firley Hall ought to have a ghost, and he said there was supposed to be one but he did not know of anyone who had ever seen it.

‘Noticing that I was looking tired after my journey he suggested that we should go to bed. There was no gas lighting in the house, which was a long way from any town. He fetched a couple of candles, and gave me one ; with the other he led the way upstairs. On arriving at the top of the main staircase I found myself in a long corridor, which was lighted in the daytime by an oriel window. Portraits of Boulter’s ancestors hung on the walls and looked coldly down on me. Except for these portraits the corridor was bare. There were no curtains

to the window and no carpeting on the floor. The air felt clammy and chilly.

'I had heard that Boulter was not as well off as he had been, and I thought that perhaps accounted for the house being so ill-lighted and heated.

'The room to which he escorted me was at the end of the corridor, close to the window, outside which long sprays of ivy were swaying in the cold night breeze. In the room, which was oak-panelled, was a fourposter bed, large enough to accommodate a dozen people, and a huge sombre wardrobe with a glass door placed opposite the old grate in which, to my joy, a log fire crackled and blazed merrily.

'Boulter hoped that I would have a good night, and left me. The sound of his receding footsteps down the corridor made me feel uncomfortably lonely. The room was very ghostly. I no longer felt tired, and sat by the fire reading a book which I had brought with me. Gradually I grew sleepy and presently dozed.

'Something woke me. The fire had burned very low, and I was about to replenish it when my eyes became riveted on the glass door of the wardrobe. It was startlingly bright and clear, and as I gazed at it a picture gradually appeared.

'I saw three people standing on the bank of a river. I had no difficulty in recognizing them; they were Horace Boulter, an elderly man with white hair, and a wonderfully attractive blonde girl wearing a blue dress and glittering gold slave-earrings. They were laughing and talking. Suddenly the girl gave the elderly man a push, which precipitated him into the river.

'Boulter seemed to be about to plunge into the river to rescue the old man when the girl pulled him forcibly back. He regarded her with an expression of utter incredulity and awful horror. She laughed. Both people faded away, and for a moment I saw only the river. A hand then rose out of the water; the stubby fingers clutched the air frantically and sank out of sight. The mirror dulled and I saw nothing further.

'Feeling decidedly eerie I quickly undressed and got into bed. There seemed to me to be something so very ominous

about the vision I had seen in the mirror that I refrained from mentioning it in the morning to Boulter. My visit speedily ended and I returned to London.

'About a year after my uncanny experience at Firley Hall I received a letter from Boulter asking me to lunch with him at the Redlawe Hotel in Mayfair. "I want you to meet my wife, Elise," he wrote. "We were married last week. She is very charming, much younger than I. I met her for the first time three months ago."

'Delighted at the prospect of seeing Boulter again I accepted his invitation. On arriving at the Redlawe I was introduced to Mrs. Boulter. There was no mistaking her or the elderly man with the white hair who had been chatting with her. I had seen them both very clearly in the mirror at Firley Hall. She was wearing the gleaming gold slave-earrings.

'I was immeasurably shocked. Mrs. Boulter eyed me anxiously and asked if I felt ill. I thanked her and said that I had not been very well lately, that I was subject to slight attacks of faintness but that they soon passed, without any serious consequences.

'All the time we were at lunch I kept thinking of the scenes that I had witnessed in the mirror, and I was thankful when the meal was over. I tried to persuade myself that the visions were merely hallucinatory, but something told me all the time that they were predictive of what would really happen. I felt miserable, but what could I do? If I told Boulter what I had seen he would either laugh and tell me I had been dreaming, or he might be extremely annoyed. So I kept my mirror visions to myself.

'About eighteen months after I had lunched with Boulter at the Redlawe Hotel I heard from him again. He was living in the south of England. "I have sold Firley Hall," he wrote. "Elise did not like the house; she said it depressed her and was too gloomy. She is delighted with this place. It is certainly very attractive. I have about three acres of land, including a very productive kitchen garden, orchard, and a lightly sloping lawn, at the foot of which flows a fine river, in which we bathe

when the weather is warm. Elise is a splendid swimmer. We have a P.G., who is elderly and very well off. He is a relative of Elise. . . . I think you met him at the Redlawe Hotel."

'His letter sent cold shivers of apprehension down my back. What I had seen in the mirror came vividly back to me—the lawn, the river, the elderly man with the white hair, pretty Elise with her glittering gold slave-earrings, and Horace Boulter with that awful look of horror in his face.

'Even now I seem to see them, as I saw them so clearly portrayed in the wardrobe mirror that night at Firley Hall. It is just a year since Boulter wrote to me. I keep hoping that my fears are groundless and that the vision I saw in the mirror was but an hallucination.'

This ended Hill's story.

The second story of a vision in a mirror was told me by Mrs. Burn in the lounge of a White Star liner when I was crossing the Atlantic for the first time.

Mrs. Burn was staying in the summer of 1866 with her friends, the Westons, at their house in the South of England.

Mr. Weston was away on business and was expected to return home very shortly.

Mrs. Burn was standing one evening at her dressing-table arranging her hair prior to descending to dinner, when she suddenly inhaled violet perfume, the air was full of it. This struck her as very odd as she had no violet scent. Wondering whence it came, she glanced around her. She was alone in the room and the door was shut.

When she turned again to the dressing-table she was astounded to see in the mirror a lovely garden with a green summer-house, surmounted with a red weathercock on one side of it, and at the far end of it a pond, on which were two white swans. Standing on the edge of the pond, apparently gazing at the swans, was a tall, slender, red-haired girl. She was wearing a white dress, gold earrings and white shoes. Stretched on the ground close to her feet was a brown dog, with a bright metal collar.

A little boy, brandishing a pistol, bounced out of the

summer-house. The girl gave a start and turned sharply round. She was pretty but her beauty was somewhat marred by her extreme pallor and an expression of utter misery in her large eyes.

The boy pointed the pistol at her and fired. The report sounded in the room. The girl toppled backwards into the pond. The boy dropped the pistol and fled. The garden and everything in it vanished, and all Mrs. Burn saw in the mirror was the reflection of her own white and horrified face.

Not knowing what to make of the glass-scene she had just witnessed, whether it was merely an hallucination or a vision produced by a supernatural agency, she finished her toilet and went down to dinner. She did not mention her strange experience to her hostess, fearing it might distress her.

The following day Mr. Weston came home, accompanied by his niece, June Power, a pretty young girl who bore a startling resemblance to the girl Mrs. Burn had seen in the mirror. She, too, looked very sad and wretched.

When June was out of the room Mrs. Burn commented on her unhappy expression, and Mr. Weston said she had been very upset by the tragic death of her sister, Daphne, who was thought to have committed suicide owing to an unfortunate love affair.

She had been found one day drowned in the pond at her home. A pistol was lying on the ground near the edge of the pond.

It was then that Mrs. Burn gave the Westons a detailed account of what she had seen in the mirror. They were immensely interested, and told Mrs. Burn that her description of the garden tallied exactly with the garden of the Powers, and that she could not have described Daphne and her youngest brother, Bertie, more accurately if she had seen them in the flesh. Violet was Daphne's favourite scent, and the Powers had a dog just like the one Mrs. Burn had seen in the glass.

Mr. Weston related Mrs. Burn's strange experience to the Powers. They at once questioned Bertie; and he eventually confessed that he had taken a pistol belonging to his brother

Ronald, a youth of twenty years of age, out of the summer-house, and not knowing that it was loaded had pointed it at Daphne and fired. Although the bullet had missed her, Daphne had apparently been so startled that she had lost her balance and fallen into the pond, and being unable to swim had been drowned.

Thinking that he had killed his sister Bertie fled, and had been too badly scared to tell anyone what had happened.

So Mrs. Burn's vision in the mirror had not been just an hallucination but a ghostly re-enaction of a tragedy that had actually occurred.¹

¹ All the names in the two Mirror Stories are fictitious.

Some Yorkshire Water Hauntings

THERE are many rumoured hauntings in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

A stream between Shipsea and Hornsea is said to be haunted from time to time by the phantom of a headless woman, who is seen wringing her hands as if in grief. Either she or a phantom closely resembling her haunted a brook not very far from Bridlington.

Within a few miles of Leven a brook is alleged to be haunted at times by a headless figure in black, the sex of which is uncertain. According to a story in circulation some years ago, a farmer was riding by the brook one night when his horse came to an abrupt halt and stood trembling all over. He looked around him to ascertain what had frightened the animal, and saw a dark figure squatting on the opposite bank of the brook. He was staring at it when it leaped over the brook and came towards him with its arms outstretched. He was horrified to see that it was headless. His horse promptly bolted and bore him without another stop till he reached his destination. He was ill for days, and took care never to venture near the brook again alone when it was dark.

Mrs. James, a reader of my books, told me the following experience she had when she was staying with friends in a small country town in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

She was driving with one of her friends, a girl of about her own age, along a rather unfrequented road. They had arrived at a part of the road where it was very narrow, allowing only just room enough for their carriage. Dark, thickly foliaged trees fringed the sides and overhung the way, and about forty yards ahead of them a brook crossed the road.

As they entered this part of the road their horse suddenly halted and began to tremble in every limb, showing unmistakable signs of the most abject fear. Mrs. James's friend, who

was driving, was at a loss to interpret the horse's strange behaviour; she plied him with the whip, but without avail. There he stood rooted, as it were, to the soil: a thin wind whistled through the trees, and the crisp, sere leaves, just beginning to turn yellow, rattled eerily together.

Mrs. James alighted in order to lead the horse past the spot wherein was concealed something which had apparently scared him. No sooner was she out of the carriage when she heard a rustling behind her. Swiftly turning round she perceived the tall figure of a man.

'Who are you?' she exclaimed. The figure made no reply but came silently on. She gazed at it, horribly fascinated. Its eyes were fixed and glassy; its left hand was upon its breast, as if it was suffering from some acute pain in the region of its heart, and through the fingers it seemed as if blood was endeavouring to penetrate. So quiet, so unearthly was the extraordinary apparition that Mrs. James gazed at it, terror-stricken. When it reached the brook it turned round and looked steadily at her with a gaze so sadly solemn that it haunted her for long after.

She was still gazing at it when her friend spoke to her. She turned to answer her friend, and when she looked round again the apparition had disappeared. Her friend had not seen it. She told Mrs. James that a man had either committed suicide or been murdered in the road many years ago, and that the road and adjoining brook had subsequently been rumoured to be haunted by his ghost.

Ghost Lights of the Trent

THE mouth of the Trent has been rumoured from time to time to be haunted by phantom lights, somewhat akin to the Corpse Candles of Wales. One story regarding them is this :

A party of holiday-makers from Hull visited friends one day in Alkborough, and in the evening went for a ramble with them along the river banks.

The holiday-makers had come to a halt, and were standing with their faces turned in the direction of the Humber when they heard a crashing sound, as though some wooden things were being crushed together, and then a noise like the dragging of chains.

The moon, which had hitherto been obscured, now showed itself from behind a mass of black clouds, and the spectators saw, lying at moorage, not very far from the shore, several fishing smacks, but what at once arrested their attention was that, despite the intense calm, the boats were being dashed against each other in the most unaccountable manner, while the chains by which they were fastened creaked and rattled, as though they were being dragged about by powerful hands. At the same time a peculiar moaning sound seemed to pervade the air.

The holiday-makers were commenting on the phenomena, and asking one another the explanation of it, when suddenly several little blue, twinkling lights were seen moving along the shore.

An old fisherman from Hull, who had hitherto watched the proceedings in profound silence, now cried out in tones of the greatest excitement: 'Do you see them? Do you see them? They're the Dead Lights, and they're not here for nought. Death! Death, nothing but death! I see it all. There they are! Three boats, all belonging to Hull.

'And in the bows of 'em are' (here he gave a wild shriek)

'John Dunn, Bert Smith and Jem Tebbutt. They're leaning over looking at us. Good God! Down goes the foremost boat with John Dunn in her. I see the black water closing over his white upturned face. Now it's Bert Smith's turn, and now Jem Tebbutt!

'They're all gone. The waves have swallowed them up. John, Bert and——' but, before he could finish speaking, he had fallen on the ground in a dead faint.

The party, who had been too impressed to utter a sound, while all this was taking place, now found their voices, and after deliberating for some moments on what they had better do, ended by carrying the old man back to the house of their friends near Alkborough, where they left him till the morning.

On recovering consciousness he emphatically declared that what he had called out was true. Those blue lights witnessed by all were Dead Lights, and he had seen three spirit boats go down with Dunn, Smith and Tebbutt on board them. 'You mark my words,' he said to his friends, 'ill news will be heard of them fellows, all three of them, mind, before long.'

His prophecy came true. For on the morrow there was a sudden squall at sea and the boat containing the three men, John Dunn, Bert Smith and Jem Tebbutt was capsized and all its occupants drowned.¹

¹ All names in this story are fictitious, and vide *Empire News*, February 1929.

The Phantom Riders

SOME years ago an old woman living not far from Newstead told me a strange story. She said: 'I was walking one evening close to the River Maun, a tributary of the Trent, with my dog.

'It was what one may describe as between the lights, neither light nor yet actually dark, and the wind was blowing so forcibly that I found it quite impossible to hold up an umbrella, although the rain was falling very fast.

'Struggling along, plunging first into one puddle and then another, I was skirting the park confines, when I heard the strangest sound. It was something like the low moaning of the wind, but mingled with it was the distinct semblance to a voice. Indeed, as I stood still and listened to it, I certainly fancied I could distinguish actual words. What they were, however, I could not say, for it was all too incoherent.

'Gradually the sound drew nearer, and then, before I realized how near it was, it was close to me, and in the dim wavering light I saw what looked like two people on horseback, the one a man in dark clothes, and the other a woman swathed from head to foot in white, ride noiselessly past me. I say noiselessly because, although the moaning, whispering sound accompanied them, I could hear neither clatter of horses' hoofs nor jingle of harness.

'This struck me as so odd that I turned and looked after them. The road was fairly straight just there, but judge of my astonishment when, after advancing some twenty or thirty yards, they made deliberately for the hedge skirting the park grounds and seemed to plunge right into it.

'At all events they abruptly vanished, and when I went to the hedge and peered through it, I could see no trace of them. There was only a wide expanse of tolerably level land, with nothing on it but the dark, flickering shadows of the clouds overhead.'¹

¹ Vide *Empire News*, February 1929.

Ghosts of the Tyne

ACCORDING to periodical rumours and traditional ghost stories and legends, the Tyne would seem not only to harbour its own peculiar species of spirits but to spread its ghostly influence throughout Tyneside, which abounds in reputed haunted houses and places.

Denton Hall, near Newcastle, was formerly haunted by the phantom of a lady in a rustling silk dress. The ghost of a lady, who was the mistress of a profligate Duke, haunted another old mansion also in the valley of the Tyne.¹

An avenue near South Shields and bordering on the Tyne is haunted at times by the ghost of a very beautiful woman in green, who trips daintily along the footpath and ultimately vanishes into the river with a long, wailing cry. A house at North Shields, near the mouth of the Tyne, is said to be still haunted, as are several other houses in or near Newcastle, all of which are close to the Tyne.

The ruins of Prudhoe Castle, overlooking the Tyne and formerly the seat of the Umframvilles, who owned it from 1066 to 1181, when it passed into the hands of the famous family of Percy, are rumoured to be haunted at times by eerie lights and sounds and vague, shadowy forms.

An old house and grounds near Dalton, not far from Newcastle, are alleged to be haunted intermittently by a ghost that is never seen but only heard singing. It always terrifies dogs but never cats, who seem to like it.

When I stayed at Newcastle some years ago I heard of a rumoured haunting somewhere between Corbridge and Bardon Mill. A Newcastle tradesman was visiting friends near Corbridge and was walking along the north bank of the Tyne one summer evening when he saw a woman in a blue dress,

¹ *Notes on the Folk Lore of the Northern Counties of England*, by William Henderson.

wheeling a perambulator, coming towards him. She was walking fast and appeared to be in a great hurry. As she drew nearer to him he noticed that she was pale and seemed to be very agitated. She did not look at him but kept her eyes fixed steadily ahead.

As she trod past him he felt that there was something peculiar about her, and turned to see where she went. To his astonishment she and the perambulator had disappeared; and there was no hedge, no wall, no obstacle of any kind to conceal them from his view, only empty space and the river.

When he got back to his friends he told them about the woman, and they said that some years previously the bodies of a woman and a child had been found in the Tyne, and that ever since then the ghost of a woman in blue, wheeling a perambulator, appeared from time to time in just about the place where he had seen her that night.

The River Derwent, a tributary of the Tyne, possesses a traditional folk lore and legendary spirit known as the Hedley Kow, which in some of the things it does is not unlike the Irish Phooka and the Scottish Water Kelpie. It can be very mischievous and in some of its pranks dangerous.

A farmer named Forster who lived in the village of Hedley, near Ebchester, in the valley of the Derwent, went into a field one morning to saddle his grey horse. After putting the saddle on what he thought was his horse and yoking the animal to a cart, the creature shook itself free, pranced gleefully about and tore away with shrieks of laughter. The farmer realized then that it was not his horse but the Hedley or Derwent Kow.¹

Another story is about a young man of Newlands, near Ebchester, who went out one evening to meet his sweetheart, and on drawing near the trysting-place saw a girl there who he thought was her.² She ran away, and the youth, thinking that she was doing it for a lark, chased her. So fast did she run, however, that he could not overtake her, and after going two or three miles he found himself knee-deep in a bog. The girl

¹ *Folk Lore of the Northern Counties of England*, by W. Henderson.

² *Ibid.*

laughed gleefully and vanished. He knew then that she was not a human being but the Hedley Kow, who could assume a variety of forms.

On his way home it appeared again as a girl and lured him into the Derwent. Had it not been for timely assistance he might have been drowned. He eventually got home.

The Kow was often seen in the Derwent and hovering around its banks.

The Hauntings of Wearedale

THE River Skerne in Wearedale is reputed to be haunted by a mischievous ghost. It is difficult to obtain any definite information about the apparition. According to rumours it is rarely visible but more often heard whistling and chuckling. Attempts to exorcise it are said to have failed.

The immediate neighbourhood of one bank of the Kent, a tributary of the Tees, was formerly haunted by a headless ghost. It was exorcised by a Roman Catholic priest who, in my opinion, was the most likely person to accomplish an efficient exorcism, and laid under a large flat stone in the river, where it remained peacefully for some years. Something apparently disturbing it, it emerged from the water and renewed its hauntings, to the terror of the neighbourhood.

The River Weare would seem to have a peculiar attraction for ghosts. There is the story of the wait who, contrary to the advice of his friends, would sing in Durham on Christmas Eve, which was on a Friday, a day regarded as very ill-omened by all believers in the supernatural. He was seen at the foot of Elvet Bridge, but never again. What became of him was never ascertained, but for years after his disappearance his ghost haunted Elvet Bridge and both banks of the Weare.

A phantom lady is rumoured to haunt the Weare near Chester-le-Street, and another lady ghost the Weare a few miles from Durham.

Some years ago there was a story of the haunting of Wearedale by a phantom grey horse. During the early part of the last century a bagman on horseback came to a Wearedale farm one evening and asked if he could stay there for the night. The farmer expressed his inability to accommodate him and suggested he should enquire at an inn a few miles distant.

After leaving the farm the bagman disappeared and his body was found in the Weare. The wounds on it proved that he had been murdered in a very horrible manner.

One night soon after the discovery of his remains, the inmates of the farm at which he had requested a night's lodging were awakened by the shrill neighing of a horse. There was something so eerie in the sound that they were considerably startled. On looking out of the windows of their rooms they saw a grey horse. As they stared at it, wondering whence it came, it threw back its head and neighed even more shrilly and eerily than before. It then ran silently across the yard and passed *through* the big closed farm gate into the rough road skirting the River Weare, and plunged into the water.

After that night the phantom horse haunted the farm and adjoining neighbourhood intermittently for a long time. It always emerged from the Weare and returned to it after its nocturnal ramblings.

In my notes there is yet another story of a Weare haunting. A Leeds lawyer and his son were walking along the south bank of the Weare one summer evening, at a place about twenty miles from Durham, when they saw a very beautiful black swan swimming in the river. It came towards them, and when in front of the lawyer, to their great astonishment, it suddenly and mysteriously vanished. Had only one of them seen the swan they might have thought it was an hallucination, but as both of them had seen it they were very puzzled. Neither of them believed in ghosts.

They mentioned the incident to the landlady of the hotel where they were staying. She looked very grave and said, 'I wish you had not seen that swan, for it is said to predict a serious happening to anyone who sees it.'

Within a week the lawyer died.

According to Mr. William Henderson, Hilton Castle in the Valley of the Weare was haunted at one time by a spirit known as the Cauld Boy, who sometimes amused himself by entering the kitchen at night and hurling everything about, and other times helping the servants by tidying the room and washing

dirty plates. He was thought to be the ghost of a servant-boy whom an owner of the Castle had killed in a fit of passion.¹

Lastly, it is recorded in Ree's Diary that the death of John Borrow of Durham was predicted by a vision of a coach, drawn by six black swine and driven by a black coachman, that appeared on or close to the River Weare.

¹ *The Folk Lore of the Northern Counties of England*, by William Henderson.

The Haunted Eden

THERE are many traditional and legendary stories about the rivers of northern England. This story is about the Eden.

The Elms, an old house that once stood on a bank of the Eden, was reputed to be haunted during the very early years of the last century, by the apparition of an old lady, and erstwhile owner of the mansion, who was seen running frantically along one of the corridors. Solely on account of the haunting, the house remained unoccupied intermittently for many years.

About the middle of the last century a party of young men went to the house one night to see if there was any truth in the stories they had heard. They not only saw the apparition of the old lady racing along the corridor, but in addition the ghost of a girl with a white evil face tearing after her. The night was very warm and dry, no rain had fallen for several days, and yet the hair and the clothes of the girl appeared to be wringing wet.

The young men were so terrified that they lost no time in getting out of the house, and after that night it was shunned more than ever.

It was shortly after their harrowing experience that a clergyman told the owner of the house a story that seemed to afford an explanation of the two apparitions.

He said he had been called to the bedside of an old woman named Emma Page, who was one of his parishioners, and she had told him a strange tale. She said that when she was a young girl she had been a maid in The Elms, which was then tenanted by Miss Dorcas White, an elderly lady who was reputed to be wealthy and was very parsimonious. The only other occupants of the house were Hilda White, a niece of the old woman, and herself. There was a Mrs. Shaw, a woman who came every day, except on Saturdays and Sundays, to chore.

Hilda White gave Emma permission to spend a week-end at her home in Appleby and paid her coach fares to and from

that town. When she returned to The Elms on the Monday she found Hilda very agitated. She said her aunt had gone out for a walk the previous evening and had not returned, and that the police were searching for her.

That evening the body of Miss Dorcas White was found in the river. Her skull had been smashed and her throat cut. As her gold watch and rings were not on her, robbery was thought to be the motive for the crime, and some gypsies who had been camping in the neighbourhood were suspected and searched, but none of the missing jewellery being found in their possession or any clue in connection with the crime traced to them, they were not apprehended, and the murder was generally regarded as an unsolved mystery.

Emma said that when she and Mrs. Shaw were having their dinner the day after the body of Miss Dorcas had been found, Mrs. Shaw told her that she had found a handkerchief in a corner of the corridor soaked in blood. Hilda White saw her looking at it and snatched it from her. She said it was her handkerchief and that she had used it to staunch a bad bleeding of her nose. Mrs. Shaw had thought it rather strange.

Not long after they had had dinner Mrs. Shaw complained of great pain in her stomach. She went home, and died that night. The doctor who attended her was very young and inexperienced and attributed her death to excessive ulceration of the stomach, and certified to that effect. Hilda White did all the cooking, and had cooked the dinner.

The morning after the death of Mrs. Shaw, Hilda White told Emma that she was no longer needed, paid her wages, with something extra for being such a good girl, and dismissed her. Emma did not remain idle long; she soon obtained another situation. She learned subsequently that Hilda White had left The Elms directly after she inherited her aunt's money. The people who rented The Elms when Hilda left did not stay there long. They complained that it was very badly haunted, and from that time onward it was constantly untenanted.

Emma said she had never lost her interest in The Elms. She had often thought about the murder of Miss Dorcas White and

the sudden death of Mrs. Shaw, and the more she had pondered over them, the more Hilda White had appeared to her to be responsible for both of them. She had never ventured till now to mention her suspicions to anyone.

She said that shortly before the party of young men had gone to The Elms and been so badly scared, the body of Hilda White had been found in the Eden, just where the body of her aunt had been found many years previously. There were no marks of violence on her and nothing to show how she had got into the river. Her death was regarded as very mysterious.

When Emma learned that the young men had seen the two ghosts that night in The Elms, that one was the ghost of an elderly lady and the other of a girl, she was sure her suspicions had been right and that Hilda White had murdered Miss Dorcas and Mrs. Shaw.

This was the tale Emma Page told the clergyman, and a few hours after she had finished relating it she died.

The owner of The Elms had it demolished and that ended the haunting by the two ghosts, but a ghost, believed to be that of Hilda White by the description people gave of it—no longer young but old and haggard, just as she was when her body was found in the Eden—continued to haunt that river for many years, and maybe still does at times.¹

¹ All names in this story are fictitious.

The Punt and the Haystack

ONE sultry morning in the fifties of the last century Mark Lesterre, the artist nephew of Dr. Walter Lesterre of Byrle, a village in the North of England, was walking along a dusty road not far from his uncle's house. Arriving at a stile he climbed over it into a field and walked to a large pond in about the middle of the field. In the pond was a punt, into which he got, with the intention of punting about for a short time before painting.

The pond had a very peculiar attraction for him. He did not know why, because it was apparently a very ordinary pond. Yet the moment that he set eyes on it something seemed to tell him that he must paint it.

The village people did not care to go near it when it was dusk. They said it was haunted.

Mark punted about for a few minutes and then rested. He was rather a lazy young man. The heat made him drowsy, and he was dozing when something woke him. A woman was crossing the field to the stile. She was tall and slight, dressed in yellow, and wore very high-heeled boots. When she drew nearer he perceived that she was attractive. Her features were neatly moulded but there was a hard expression in her eyes, and her mouth suggested bad temper. She was young, not more than twenty-three or four, and her hands did not look as if they had done much hard work. She wore a lot of jewellery and seemed out of place in the country. Mark was susceptible. The woman fascinated him. Keeping a short distance in her rear he followed her through a succession of fields.

In the last of them was a haystack, and reclining under it was a bald, middle-aged man, who looked like a farmer.

The woman stole quietly and quickly past the man, who appeared to be asleep, and disappeared from sight behind the

haystack. A minute or two later Mark was the witness of a ghastly happening. He had come to a halt and was deliberating whether to go on or to retreat, when his attention was drawn to a bright object on the top of the hay. It was a pitchfork with sharp prongs that glittered in the sunlight.

They fascinated Mark. Presently he saw to his astonishment the woman in the yellow dress crawl towards the fork, seize it and peer down at the sleeping man. Holding the fork directly over his head she jabbed it viciously down with all her might. She then raised her head and smiled gleefully, as her dark eyes encountered the gaze of the horrified Mark.

He was staring at her aghast, when the haystack, man and cruel woman vanished, and he found himself seated once again in the punt. How he was so speedily transported there was quite beyond his comprehension.

He might have persuaded himself that it was just a very unpleasant dream had he not missed his pipe, and on searching around for it found it just about where he had been standing when he witnessed the horrible deed.

He retraced his steps to his uncle's residence very perplexed.

Just a year after his strange experience he paid his uncle another visit. The day after his arrival he went to a party at the house of John Drake, a well-to-do farmer patient of his uncle, who had very recently been married and come to live in the locality.

The moment he saw the farmer and his young and attractive wife he received a shock. They were the phantom man and woman who had figured so prominently in his haystack vision. There was no mistaking either of them. He had had frequent mental pictures of both of them, more especially, perhaps, of the woman with her dark, sharp eyes and wicked gleeful smile.

He steeled himself to meet Mrs. Drake's gaze, fearful of what he might read in her eyes, but they only evinced a very formal welcome. She appeared to be quite twenty years younger than her stout, semi-bald, red-faced husband.

There was a rather good-looking young man in the room, and although Mark could detect no marked sign of any

intimacy between him and Mrs. Drake, he nevertheless sensed very acutely that something of the kind covertly existed.

He spoke to his uncle about it, and Dr. Lesterre laughed and said: 'Don't be so suspicious, Mark. Mrs. Drake is all right. She is fond of her husband. Try and get that haystack and pitchfork out of your mind. It was only a dream.'

'I wish I thought so,' Mark said.

He never saw the Drakes again after that night. He left Byrle a few days after the party and returned to his studio in Montparnasse.

Another year had passed, and he was painting in Bruges when he received a letter from Dr. Lesterre, saying John Drake had incurred a fatal accident when sitting under a haystack in one of his fields. A pitchfork fell from the top of the haystack on to his head and pierced his brain.

Mark did not visit Byrle again for two years. In the interim his uncle died and left him his house. He made enquiries about Mrs. Drake, and was told that she married within a few months of her husband's death, sold the farm and had gone to America.

If there had been any suspicion of foul play it was not mouthed openly. The verdict at the inquest on John Drake had been one of 'Accidental Death'.

Mark always thought his vision of the haystack must have been purposeful and blamed himself for not having done something in regard to it, but what could he have done?

If he had mentioned it to the police they would have told him it was only a dream or delusion; and had he voiced it in public he would in all probability have got into sore trouble.¹

¹ All the names and people and places in this case are fictitious.

Hauntings of the English Lakes

THERE are many traditional ghost stories of hauntings of the English lakes.

After the execution of the gallant and greatly beloved James Radcliffe, third and last Earl of Derwentwater, on February 24, 1716, it was affirmed that the water in Keswick Water, as Lake Derwentwater was then called, acquired temporarily a crimson hue, and that at night the sky glowed ominously with ensanguined streams.¹ The phenomena were witnessed by many spectators, and have ever since been known as 'Lord Derwentwater's Lights'.

There was a strange tradition that, prior to any calamity in the family of the Radcliffes, a tall figure, clad in grey robes, was seen on the shore of Derwentwater. The apparition appeared to the unfortunate Earl of Derwentwater, reproached him for his delay in joining the Insurgents, and gave him a crucifix, which would render him proof against steel and bullets.²

The ghost of Lady Derwentwater, who has been unjustly accused of persuading her husband to take part in the rising of 1715, is said to have haunted Derwentwater for a time.

The ghost of Ermengarde, a fair maiden who, for attempting to seduce a holy man, was doomed never to rest in her grave, is supposed to have haunted St. Herbert's Isle on Derwentwater for many years.

The lakes and the neighbouring hills in Cumberland, Westmorland and North Lancashire were for many years believed to be abodes of enchanters, and to be haunted by the ghosts of old Scandinavian settlers who appeared sometimes as warriors and sometimes as old, white-haired chieftains and

¹ *Lays and Legends of the English Lake Country*, by John Pagen White, F.R.C.S.

² *Picturesque England*, compiled and edited by L. Valentine.

bards. Music played and sung by invisible beings used to be heard on the lakes and their lonely shores.¹

According to Sir Walter Scott the last of the Brownies, known in Ettrick Forest, haunted Bodsbeck, a wild and solitary spot near the head of Moffat Water.

A spirit known in Cumberland as Hob-Thross used to haunt the lakes and neighbouring old houses of that county. It was described as 'meagre, flat-nosed, shaggy and wild', and is mentioned by Gervase of Tilbury in his writings.

Cross-Fell in the Lakes region, which is remarkable for the phenomenon of the Helm-Cloud upon the summit and the Helm-wind generated within it, was formerly known as Fiends'-Fell, so dubbed from the popular belief that evil spirits haunted it. They were said to have been expelled by St. Augustine, who prayed and built an altar on the mountain.

A slate or flag quarry, known as the 'Crier of Claife', long disused and overgrown with weeds, on the wildest and most lonely part of Latter-barrow, which divides the valleys of Esthwaite and Windermere, above the Ferry, was for a long time haunted by a very terrible apparition. Named the Crier, it was thought to have been exorcised permanently but, according to rumours current from time to time, the haunting occurs intermittently even yet. I have referred more fully to it in one of my recent books.

The North Lancashire Lake District abounds in stories of ghostly happenings. The following is one of them:²

One gloomy early autumn evening a few young men, who were in a very lively mood, emerged from a country mansion, the ancient seat of the Montravers, bent on adventure and mischief.

The moon had not yet risen, and only a few stars twinkling in a cloudless sky served to lighten their path. Here and there a light shone in the windows of such cottagers who were not in bed, and nothing disturbed the silence save the barking of a dog and the distant tinkling of a sheep bell.

¹ *Lays and Legends of the English Lake Country*, by John Pagen White, F.R.C.S.

² Mentioned in *The Pocket Magazine*.

'Where shall we go?' Vibert, one of the party, asked. 'How about paying a visit to old Martha Young, the reputed witch? She is said to have a magic mirror which reveals coming events, and to hold intercourse with the spirits that are rumoured to haunt the lake close to which she lives. Let us either go to her or to the dance that the miller chap, Overbury, is giving to celebrate the coming of age of his pretty daughter, Doris.'

After debating for a while they decided to visit Martha, and perhaps go to the dance afterwards.

Martha Young, who the superstitious people thought was a witch, lived in a wretched hovel within a few yards of one of the North Lancashire lakes. The roof of her habitation had nearly collapsed, and there was hardly a whole pane of glass in her windows. She appeared to be very old and to have no apparent means of obtaining a livelihood. She was never known to beg or to have received any help from the parish; and it was rarely that the people who came to have their fortunes told paid her anything. She was seldom seen to stir from her dwelling, and then it was only for the purpose of collecting sticks and bits of twig for her fire. How she managed to exist was a mystery.

Had she lived in the days of persecuting witches she would probably have been tortured and burned to death or drowned.

Vibert and his companions found her seated on a three-legged stool by a turf fire, surrounded by three black cats and an old sheep dog.

She was tall and thin, her face haggard, her eyes large and sunk down deep in their sockets, and her whole appearance was repulsive and forbidding. On a small table near her were the remnants of a meal, consisting of a few potatoes, crusts of bread and a small jug of water.

She glared at the young men, and in a hoarse, masculine voice asked what they wanted. Vibert apologized for coming at such a late hour and said they would like her to tell them something about their futures, as they had heard that she possessed a magic crystal.

Martha rose from her seat and peered closely into the face of each of the young men. Then, as if satisfied that they were

not there to harm her, she said she would do as they wished but begged them to obey her instructions, lest by not doing so they would be harmed. They all promised implicit obedience to her commands.

The abject poverty of the hovel made even the most thoughtless of them pity her. The furniture consisted of three stools, an old deal table, a few pans, some broken jugs, a wretched pallet with scarcely a rag to cover it, a few old musty books which lay in a corner, a cauldron and a sack.

Martha sat for a few minutes, and then told them that she was going to utter a few incantations, during which they must keep absolutely still and on no account interrupt her. She drew a circle on the floor with a piece of chalk and in the middle of it placed a chafing-dish filled with burning embers; on this she fixed the cauldron, which she half filled with water. She then bade those of the young men who had the courage to stand in the circle and join in the incantations.

Only two of them, Vibert and Rankine, did as she requested; the others, who were far too frightened, stood as far as they could from the circle. The incantations having been uttered, Martha opened the sack and took from it a skeleton head, bones of various sizes, herbs and the dead bodies of small animals, and threw them one by one into the cauldron, and while thus employed muttered words in a language unknown to any of her hearers. When the cauldron boiled she put her fingers to her lips, enjoining them to keep perfectly still, and pointed to the wide open door, beyond which lay the lake gleaming in the moonlight.

Presently the young men were thrilled to see two shadowy figures come from the lake, carrying a large crystal ball, which they placed outside the circle. Martha lifted it and set it in the centre of the circle. She then asked Vibert if he really wished to see what the future had in store for him, and on his replying in the affirmative, she told him to peer steadily at the crystal.

At first he saw nothing, and then suddenly he saw a counterpart of himself in the act of falling over a frightful precipice. The vision lasted for only a few moments, and when it had

vanished Martha asked Rankine if he wished to look in the crystal. He also expressed his readiness. He had not gazed at it for more than a few seconds before he saw in it his father, wearing his usual clothes and looking very ill. The crystal quickly clouded, and the figure resembling his father disappeared.

Martha removed the cauldron, extinguished the fire and bade the young men depart.

'Before we leave,' one of the young men said, 'tell me if the lake is really haunted, and if the figures that I saw come from it in the crystal were really ghosts or merely illusionary.'

'If people round here say that the lake is haunted, let that suffice,' Martha said. 'Now go!'

Before the young men left they gave her money.

When they had gone a little distance from Martha's hovel Vibert, who appeared to be very agitated, told his companions what he had seen in the crystal, and wondered if it was just an illusion or an hallucination, or really due to the supernatural.

One of the young men said that he had felt drowsy soon after Martha had put the cauldron on the fire, and thought she must have put something in it to dope them. He said the figures he had seen coming from the lake looked very shadowy and unreal, just the kind of things that a person who had taken dope might see.

Rankine said he thought that what he had seen in the crystal really was a vision created, partly at least, by the spirits that haunted the lake. He declared that he had always had a very eerie feeling whenever he had been in close proximity to the lake.

The young men kept arguing about their strange experience in Martha Young's hovel until they reached the spot where they were to disperse, some going one way home and some another.

Within a week Vibert fell over a cliff at a seaside resort on the west coast of England and was killed. About the same time as this fatality occurred Rankine's father had a serious illness and died. The prophetic vision each of the two young men had seen in the crystal was thus verified.

Soon after their visit to Martha Young she left the neighbourhood. Whither she went no one ever knew. The hovel where she had lived for many years was demolished, and both the site of it and the lake close to it were for a long time shunned after dusk as gruesome lights and shapes were rumoured to be seen there.¹

¹ The names in this story, except that of the reputed witch, are fictitious.

THE HAUNTED RIVERS AND
WATERS OF WALES

The River of Ghostly Stealth

THE following account of a haunted river in Merioneth, related in the first person, is based on a story of an actual experience that was published in the *Ladies' Cabinet* in 1835.

In the summer of 1832 I was on a walking tour in Wales. I was between Dolgelly and Bala when I was overtaken by a storm. The night was dark, the rain heavy, and the road so uneven, full of deep ruts and hilly, that I could only grope my way with difficulty. At every few yards I either plunged into a miniature morass or, stumbling over a rock, found myself smarting in the centre of a gorse bush.

At length I grew desperate—human nature could stand it no longer—and resolving to perish with the cold rather than flounder on under such pitiable conditions, I threw myself on a boulder and prepared to lie there till daybreak.

It is possible that I had remained in this position for ten or twenty minutes, when I was roused by the glow of a lantern, and, starting up, I saw confronting me the figure of a short man, wrapped in a shaggy greatcoat and wearing a slouched hat. He was holding a lantern in his hand.

By a series of pantomimic gestures he assured me that his intentions were amicable, and that he was anxious to guide me to some place of shelter where I should have a more comfortable pallet than a bare rock. I accepted his offer, though not without some misgivings, as I could not remember ever having met anyone quite so uncouth and bizarre.

Turning abruptly to the right he struck across a wide moor covered with gorse and innumerable boulders and so studded with pools that I seemed to be in a perpetual state of wading. Emerging from this, I wended my way along the side of a precipice, at the bottom of which flowed a river.

Beckoning me to follow, my guide mysteriously disappeared, and peering over the edge of the chasm I perceived him, to my

amazement, making his descent by an almost invisible and perpendicular pathway.

For a second or so I hesitated, and then, making up my mind to brave anything rather than remain by myself in such an unfamiliar and dangerous neighbourhood, I cautiously lowered myself over the brink and, after a few tumbles, succeeded in overtaking him just as he arrived at the bottom.

The valley in which I now found myself was bathed in a gloom and wrapt in a silence that was indescribably eerie. There was something thrillingly uncanny and sinister in the river, which flowed past me, deep and dark, with a speed and stillness suggestive of horrible stealth.

Close to the river were the ruins of a cottage singularly devoid of moss and lichens and any kind of rank vegetation. I tried to move away from the ruins, but some kind of weird compelling force held me rooted to the ground.

I appealed to my guide to aid me but he made no response, and stood rigid and silent, like a statue, on the bank of the river. Suddenly he removed his hat and revealed a white mask-like face utterly devoid of expression. For a few seconds he remained motionless, and then he glided over the river and vanished amid the gloom and shadows on the far side.

Directly after this happened use returned to my limbs, and I lost no time in scrambling out of the awful valley. After walking several miles I came to an inn, where I was able to stay for the night.

I learned next day from the landlord that the river and the ruins in the valley were well known to be very badly haunted. Before the cottage had fallen into a ruinous state it had been occupied by a Mr. and Mrs. Evans.

At the instigation of her husband Mrs. Evans, a dark, handsome woman, flirted with a pedlar, known as Black Dave. She induced him to stay in the cottage, and when he was asleep she sat on him while her husband cut his throat. They weighted his body with stones and threw it into the river.

Within a week of their cruel deed the cottage caught fire. Mrs. Evans was burned to death, and her husband, who was

badly injured, only lingered long enough to make a full confession of their crime.

It was soon after the burning of the cottage that rumours of ghostly happenings at the scene of the murder were circulated, and the valley acquired such an ill reputation that few people dared to venture in it alone after nightfall.

Such was the tale that I heard, and at the conclusion of it I left the inn and continued on my walking tour, only too thankful to leave the locality.

The Fifth Stepping-Stone

RICHARD MOOR and his wife, Laura, were spending their summer holiday with friends in a small town in South Wales. They were walking along a pretty rural road a few miles from the town where they were staying, when they suddenly saw a little boy a short distance ahead of them. He was about eight years of age and was wearing a blue cloth roundabout, i.e. short jacket worn by children in the thirties and forties of the last century.

There was something about him, about his general appearance and the way in which he walked, that struck them as queer. They followed him to a stream which crossed the road, watched him walking on the big stones that spanned the water, quickly and easily, as if used to them. Suddenly he disappeared.

Fearing he had fallen into the stream, Richard ran to it, but there was not a sign of the boy, and the water was nowhere more than a foot or two deep. Had he fallen into it he would only have wetted himself; he could hardly have been drowned.

Much puzzled and wondering if the boy had been an hallucination, they crossed the stream. When they came to the fifth stepping-stone, which was rather larger than the others, they both experienced a very uncanny sensation, as if there was a deep, dark, horribly dank pit under their feet. Directly they reached the sixth stone the feeling went.

Within a short distance of the stream was an inn, and feeling hot and tired, they had tea there. The landlady was a very pleasant, buxom woman, who far from laughing when they told her about the boy, was extremely interested.

'About twenty years before I came here,' she said, 'some people named Jones kept this inn. They had a little boy just like the boy you have described. He disappeared one day. The stream was very full at the time, and he was supposed to have fallen into it and been drowned.'

'There was an old man named Davis living near here then, and when he heard about the missing boy he suggested moving the fifth stepping-stone, which had been loose for some time. This was done and under where it had rested was a deep cavity, at the bottom of which were the body of the little boy and a lot of bones, some of animals and others of human beings. The cavity was filled in, the stone replaced and made secure.

'The stream had long been reputed to be haunted, and after the discovery of the boy's body his ghost was said to be seen crossing the stepping-stones, and always vanishing when it reached the fifth stone.'¹

¹ This case is founded on fact, The names in it are fictitious.

The Valley of the River of Death

DURING their career as medical practitioners doctors sometimes come in contact with the supernatural. It was so in the case of Dr. John Wells, who at the beginning of the present century had just bought a practice in a small town in Wales.¹

Soon after his advent there he was told by an old inhabitant of the town that he would not stay there long. Two of his predecessors had left before they had been there a year. When asked if they could explain the reason of their brief sojourn in the town they would not say.

There certainly did not appear to be any specific reason. There did not seem to be anything materially wrong with the house. It was well built and commodious, and there was nothing the matter with the drainage. It was pleasantly situated. The people were friendly, and the climate was no worse than it was in other parts of Wales. Yet there was something about it that they seemingly did not like.

For the first two or three weeks after Wells had been in his new home, nothing of any particular consequence happened. He liked the house; the rooms were a nice size and well ventilated. The walls and roof were watertight, the outlook pleasant. The people he contacted were not very cordial, but on the other hand they did not appear to be at all inimical, and he was looking forward to a long and very pleasant residence among them.

He was sitting in front of the fire in his sitting-room one evening, feeling very tired after working hard all day, when Squint, his fox terrier, who was stretched on the carpet by his side, suddenly growled, and the telephone bell in the hall rang loudly. He got up, feeling queer, went into the hall, put the receiver to his ear and enquired who was speaking.

¹ All names and places in this story are fictitious. The principal characters in it have been dead for many years.

'It's I, Jill,' a woman replied. 'Come at once, darling. Something dreadful has happened.'

Wells had no idea who Jill was, but nevertheless he put on his hat and coat, for the weather was cold, got his bicycle and started off. He had as yet little knowledge of the neighbourhood, but some strange impelling force guided him. He was himself and yet not himself, and seemed to be in a queer, perplexing day-dream.

The road along which he cycled was narrow, rough, and little frequented. It was also very hilly. The scenery on either side of it was rugged and picturesque. A gentle descent led to a wooded valley, through which a river, swollen by recent heavy rain, flowed turbulently. There was something peculiarly weird in the sound.

In the valley, near the river, was a white house. Dr. Wells entered the little garden in front of it, propped his machine against one of the walls and rang the front-door bell. A woman answered it. She was young, with brown hair and lovely dark eyes. He somehow knew that she was Jill and that he had known her intimately for some time. Everything about her and the house seemed extraordinarily familiar to him. He gazed longingly and admiringly at her. She was very pretty.

He was not at all surprised when she said: 'How kind of you, Charlie, to come here so promptly. It's Henry.' And Wells heard his voice saying, 'Drunk again?'

'He had been drinking, but he will never drink again; he is dead,' Jill said, and then, with ill-concealed joy in her eyes: 'Come with me. He's in the dining-room.'

She took him to a room in the rear of the house. Lying on his back on the floor of it was the body of a man of about forty years of age. He was rather stout, with dark hair streaked with grey, blue eyes and a moustache.

Wells bent over him. The man smelt of whisky; apparently he had been drinking heavily. But it was not drink that killed him. He had been suffocated. Clenched between his teeth was a fragment of some brown material.

Wells' eyes wandered from the man to Jill. On one side of

her neck there was a long, red scratch, and a similar one on the back of one of her lovely white hands.

'My dear little Siamese cat, Topsy, did those scratches, Charlie,' she said, 'and as she tried to bite me I was obliged to have the poor darling put to sleep. I shall miss her dreadfully.'

She was wearing a brown dress with long sleeves, and Wells noticed that the cuff of one of the sleeves was torn. The dress was of the same colour as the fragment of material in the dead man's mouth.

Seeing the look of horror in his eyes and interpreting his thoughts, Jill gazed appealingly at him and said, 'You still love me, Charlie, don't you?'

'Yes,' he replied hoarsely. 'God forgive me, darling, I still love you. You killed him, didn't you?'

She nodded. 'I had to kill him. I couldn't stand him any longer. He was a beast. For heaven's sake don't let me be accused of murdering him. Can't you certify that he had a fit, or his heart was diseased?'

Wells shook his head. 'I'm afraid not. It would be too risky. I must try and think of something else.'

Although horribly shocked at what she had done, he was madly in love with her. Her beauty intoxicated him. He felt he would risk his reputation, life and soul to save her from being arrested.

'You look ill,' she said. 'I will get you some brandy.'

While she was out of the room getting the brandy he happened to glance at a large mirror on one of the walls. He saw in it not the face of John Wells, who was fair and clean-shaven, but the face of a man with dark eyes and hair and a short black beard; a man who might have been several years older than Wells. He did not think it at all strange, and was neither startled nor surprised.

He was looking at various other things in the room when Jill returned with the brandy.

'I have an idea, Charlie,' she said. 'Will you help me to put the body in the river? The servants are out and won't be back till late. There is no one in the house but ourselves.'

Wells marvelled at her calmness. She showed no emotion. 'Someone passing by the house may see us,' he said.

'There is not much fear of that,' she laughed. Very few people pass the house in daytime, and fewer still after dark. People don't like this valley. They say the river is haunted. The local Welsh people are absurdly superstitious. Anyhow, we must take the risk, Charlie, and if you really love me you will do anything to get me out of this jam. I don't at all relish the idea of being hanged,' and she shivered.

'I'll help you,' Wells exclaimed. 'Let me have a peep out of doors to make sure the coast is clear.'

'No, darling,' Jill said, 'I'll do that. You stay in the hall with the body till I come to you.'

They carried the body of the dead man into the hall and deposited it near the front door. Jill stole quietly out of the house, and soon returned. 'No one is about,' she said.

They carried the body to the river and threw it as far as they could into the raging, roaring water. There was something very horrible about the river. Wells could well imagine that it harboured dreadful spirits that tempted people to commit evil deeds. He was only too thankful when their task was done and they got back to the house. Jill insisted on him having more brandy.

'How did you do it?' he enquired, while they were sitting drinking.

'He was lying on the floor,' she said. 'I got a cushion and put it on his face. He struggled and scratched me, but I am very strong and he was too drunk to offer much resistance. I sat on the cushion till he ceased to move. He was dead when I took the cushion away. It was really quite easy, and I am only too glad I did it. I hated him and it is a blessed relief to be free. There's not any fear of being found out, is there?'

'I don't think so,' Wells said. 'Everyone knows he drank, and it will be thought that he walked into the river when he was drunk. There are no marks of violence on him, and if no one saw us with the body, I think we are safe.'

She threw her arms round his neck and kissed him. 'You

are a darling to help me, Charlie,' she said. 'I love you dearly. I have always loved you. I wish I could ask you to stay here tonight, but the servants will be back about twelve—I gave them leave to stay out late—and it wouldn't look well if they found you here.'

She gave him more brandy in spite of his remonstrances, kissed him repeatedly, then saw him go. He felt rather fuddled when he mounted his machine, for he was not used to spirits and had never drunk so much brandy.

The night had grown dark. Heavy clouds obscured the moon. A storm was brewing. The roaring of the haunted river and the thought of what was in it made him shudder.

He pedalled hard to get out of the valley and was on the brink of a very steep descent when his lamp burned low. He thought this odd because he remembered filling the lamp before he left home.

He got off his machine, and when he looked at the lamp he found it was not his. That made him look at the machine. This too was not his, but in the dark and in his fuddled state he might easily have mistaken it for his own bicycle as it was of a very similar pattern.

He asked himself how it could have happened. He knew the exact spot where he had put his machine when he got to the white house, and it was from that very spot he had taken this strange bicycle. No other bicycle was there. If it had been a bright night a cyclist passing the house might possibly have looked in the garden, and seeing his machine have effected an exchange. But something told him that no such thing happened, and that it was someone in the house who had taken his machine.

And Jill had said the servants were out, no one was in the house but themselves. If that was really so, it looked as if it must have been Jill. But what was her motive? Was it merely because she had a sudden fancy for his bicycle? But it was a man's bicycle. Women did not ride men's bicycles, or did they?

He was too fuddled to think. If the lamp went out he would trust to luck to find his way home in the dark. There was little

fear of meeting a policeman. He had never seen one on a Welsh country road at night and very rarely in the daytime.

He began to descend the hill, and he had not gone more than a yard or two before his lamp went out. His speed increased rapidly. He sought to check it, but to his dismay the brake would not act. Faster and faster he went, the night air whistling in his ears. There was a sudden terrific impact with something hard, and then a complete blackout.

When he recovered consciousness he found himself sitting before the fire in his sitting-room, with Squint lying on the floor by his side. It took him some minutes to realize he was alive and once again his own self—John Wells.

The following day he met an old gentleman named Allison, and to him he related his strange experience. 'Of course it was only a dream,' he said, 'but it was extraordinarily vivid.'

Mr. Allison looked enquiringly at him. 'Have you ever heard of Mrs. Martin and Dr. Charles Griffiths?' he asked.

Dr. Wells shook his head. 'Never.'

'Are you sure?'

'Quite sure.'

'And you have never been to the valley which is known locally as the River Valley of Death because of the number of people found drowned in it?'

'No. Why?'

'Because,' Mr. Allison said, 'you have just described it—a valley with a roaring river and a solitary white house. Rather more than twenty years ago Mrs. Jill Martin lived in that house. Her husband, Henry Martin, was a jolly man, very popular in the neighbourhood but too fond of whisky. He often came home drunk. Jill, who was partly French, was very pretty and had many admirers, among them Dr. Charles Griffiths, whose face you saw in the glass. He was about forty-five years of age, with dark hair and eyes and a short black beard. You could not have described Jill and Charles more accurately if you had seen them in the flesh and blood. Martin was found drowned one day in the valley river. It was much swollen at the time owing to recent heavy rain, and it was supposed that he

had walked into it when he was drunk. About the time that this happened Griffiths met with a fatal accident. He was riding one of those high bicycles, the predecessors of the present day safety machines, one dark night, and when descending a very steep hill his brake would not act, with the result that he ran into a wall and was killed. After what you have told me it looks as if Jill not only murdered her husband but cunningly contrived to get Griffiths out of the way too.'

'What happened to her?' Wells asked.

'Oh, within a short time after Henry's death she married a foreigner, sold her house, and went to South America.

'She did not survive her second marriage long, for she and her husband were drowned at sea.'

THE HAUNTED RIVERS AND
WATERS OF SCOTLAND

Some Scottish Loch Hauntings

LOCH LOMOND was haunted for many years by a kelpie that played tricks, sometimes harmful, on people who visited the lake alone at night, Kelpies also haunted Lochs Glaish and Awe.¹ A phantom lake populated by little women phantoms used to appear from time to time in the Highlands. Loch Nigdal was haunted at one time by a phantom woman in a green silk dress, who was erroneously termed a Banshee.²

Hugh Miller, in his *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland*,³ relates a story of a Bean Nighe, or the Phantom Washing Woman, that haunted Loch Slin.

In the autumn of 1742 the pretty daughter of the widow of a farmer was returning home one Sunday morning along a path on the southern bank of Loch Slin, where the parish of Tarbat bordered on that of Fearn.

She had turned a projecting angle of the bank when she saw, not ten yards away, what seemed to be a tall, lovely female standing in the water immediately beyond the line of reeds and rushes that fringed the shore, engaged apparently in knocking clothes on a stone with the sort of bludgeon used in the north of Scotland for that purpose.

There was something so unearthly and eerie about the woman that the farmer's daughter felt sure she was the Bean Nighe that was known to haunt the lake. Although terrified, she was compelled to keep looking at the phantom, who seemed to ply her work with a malignant pleasure. After a minute or two she threw down the bludgeon and pointed to a number of smocks and shirts that were covered with blood. This horrified the girl to such a degree that she tore herself away from the lake and ran all the way home. When she

¹ *Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands*, by J. G. Campbell.

² *The Ghost World*, by the Rev. T. T. Dyer.

³ Published in 1874.

arrived there she collapsed, and it was some time before she recovered.

Shortly after noon she went for a walk with her mother, and when they were near the Old Abbey of Fearn there was a tremendous crash, accompanied by a terrific cry; a dense cloud of dust enveloped the ancient building, and when it had cleared away the frightened mother and daughter saw that the ponderous roof of the Abbey had collapsed. As soon as they had recovered in a measure from the shock of the noise and sight, they hastened to the Abbey to see if they could be of any aid.

As they approached the building they met two young women covered with blood, who were running shrieking along the road, and shortly afterwards an old man, so badly injured that he could hardly walk. He told them not to stop and try to help him, but to go as quickly as possible to the assistance of those people who were worse injured than himself. They did as he bid and ran to the churchyard.

A fearful scene met their eyes. Two-thirds of the Abbey roof had fallen, and nearly half the people who had been attending service inside the building were buried in the ruins. Men, covered with blood and dust and yelling like maniacs, were tearing up the stones and slates that were heaped over their wives and children. All the sufferers were carried out one by one and laid on the flat tombstones of the Abbey churchyard. The farmer's widow busied herself in staunching their wounds and restoring their animation.

A young man came staggering from the ruins, his face bleeding, carrying the mutilated dead body of his father. It was a cousin of the farmer's daughter.

Thirty-six people had been killed, and many so badly injured that they never recovered.

The Bean Nighe was never seen knocking and washing in Loch Slin except before some dire calamity in the neighbourhood.

Hugh Miller, in the same book, writes about another loch haunting in Northern Scotland. About the middle or latter part of the eighteenth century a young man bought a piece of

ground in the parish of Tarbat, on which stood the ruins of a cottage. The last occupants of the cottage had been an old married couple who were miserably poor and had eked out a wretched existence. The young man rebuilt the cottage and removed to it with his wife.

Close to the cottage was a little muddy lake, which almost dried up in the summer. It bore such an eerie reputation that few people cared to linger near it after dark. The young married couple, having but recently come to the neighbourhood, were unaware of this, but the first night they were in the cottage they saw weird lights hovering about the lake and heard ghastly cries and other harrowing sounds coming from it.

The third evening they were disturbed by strange noises in the cottage, and the door of their bedroom was suddenly opened and a figure, wrapped up in a grey plaid, entered the room. The young man leaped out of bed and tried to grapple with the intruder, but his arms encountered nothing solid.

‘Who are you?’ he asked.

‘The unhappy ghost of the pedlar who was murdered sixty years ago and his body thrown into the lake,’ the spectre replied. ‘I have come to tell you that the murderer no longer lives, and in two short hours the permitted time of my wanderings on earth shall be over; for had I escaped the cruel knife, I would have died in my bed, a grey-haired old man.’

The spectre had hardly finished speaking when it vanished. From that night onward the cottage and the lake ceased to be haunted.

The young man informed the local authorities what had happened, with the result the lake was drained and the skeleton of a man was found buried in the mud and weeds. It was believed to be the skeleton of the pedlar who had disappeared very mysteriously from the neighbourhood many years previously.

The End of the Ravine

THERE are two versions of the story of the Haunting at the End of the Wall. One was published in one of my very early books entitled *Haunted Highways and Byways*¹ and the other, which differs considerably from it, I came across quite recently. Both are about James Currie² of Montrose. I never met Currie. He was a young man when I was a boy, and lived in the days of horse-drawn vehicles and early bicycles.

He was spending his annual summer holiday in a remote part of the Scottish Highlands. He was a keen fisherman and set out one evening from his hotel to find a tarn, which he had been told was full of trout. He was accompanied by his dog, Blob. The route he took led him across a wild and lonely moor, surrounded on all sides by gaunt mountains.

Leaving the moor in his rear, he entered a narrow, gloomy ravine, at the end of which he could see the tarn gleaming in the distance. The air felt unpleasantly chilly, the silence was depressing; it did not seem natural. Nothing, not the cry of a bird or the slightest sound disturbed it. There was a sense of deadness in the atmosphere and of an absence of all life.

Currie was not superstitious. He did not believe in ghosts, or thought that he did not. Yet, for probably the first time in his life, he felt strangely uneasy. There seemed to be a tenseness and a sense of general expectation present all around him. Blob kept very close to him.

He was rather more than halfway through the ravine when a sudden sensation of intense dread came over him, and he halted. He dared not advance another yard.

The wall of one side of the ravine ended in a lofty, keen-edged rock, and he felt instinctively that concealed behind it and waiting for him was some awful thing that had come out of

¹ 1914.

² All names in this story are fictitious.

the tarn. He blamed himself for being so silly and fanciful, and tried to overcome his fear, but it persisted. Blob was seemingly afraid of something, too, for he crouched on the ground, even closer than before to Currie, and whined pitifully.

Currie stuck it out as long as he could and then, feeling thoroughly ashamed of himself, he returned to his hotel.

He mentioned his experience in the ravine to the landlord of his hotel, and asked him if he could think of any explanation for his sudden feeling of dread.

'The tarn is rumoured to be haunted,' the landlord said, 'and several people have told me that when they were in the ravine they felt much the same as you did.'

There was a London cockney in the room, and he laughed and said: 'I thought you Scots were far too hardy to be afraid of ghosts. I don't believe there are such things.'

His laugh nettled Currie. 'I'm going there again,' he said.

'In the daytime, of course,' the Londoner sneered, 'and when the sun is shining brightly. Night is the time for ghosts. I bet you dare not go then.'

'How much will you bet?' Currie asked.

'A quid,' the Londoner said. 'Can't afford more.'

'Taken!' Currie cried. 'I'll go there tomorrow night.'

'Twelve o'clock is the time, mind.'

'Very well, then, it shall be at twelve.'

At twenty minutes to twelve o'clock the next night James Currie entered the ravine leading to the haunted tarn. It was fine, a full moon, countless shining stars and no clouds.

He had enjoyed his walk over the moor. The air had been fresh and sweet with the scent of gorse and heather. There had been a feeling of friendliness in the atmosphere, the presence of a bond of sympathy between him and all the natural objects around him—the patches of bracken, briar and grass, the boulders and far-off rugged mountains. All seemed to be bidding him be of good heart. It was comforting. He felt cheerful and in excellent spirits.

Everything changed the moment he crossed the threshold of the ravine, the walls of which rose high above him, their

shadows darkening the stony ground. The track being so narrow, the ruts and boulders so numerous, and light so limited, he had to proceed slowly and carefully. His mood, too, underwent a change. He was no longer light-hearted but conscious of a feeling of oppression and apprehension in the atmosphere.

The gorge was no longer intensely hushed. There were occasional sounds, the falling of a fragment of rock from one of the walls of the ravine, the doleful hooting of a night bird, the scampering over the stony ground of some small animals, and noises not quite so easy to explain. Trite as were most of them, they all made Currie start. The farther he advanced, the more edged became his nerves.

He blamed himself for having come, and longed to be back in the hotel, some of the inmates of which were probably sitting round the parlour fire, for the night was cold, laughing and joking and speculating about him, whether he would win or lose the bet. As a proof that he had won, he had to bring back a pewter jug that the landlord and his son had put in a certain specified spot close to the end of the ravine.

When Currie reached the spot in the ravine, beyond which he had been unable to venture the preceding evening, he experienced once again the same feeling of awful dread. Again he fancied a terrifying spirit had emerged from the tarn and was lying in wait for him round the corner of the gorge. He fought desperately to overcome the fear that chained him to the spot. He crossed himself and uttered a prayer, and advanced.

Foot by foot and yard by yard he diminished very gradually the distance from the dreaded end of the rocky walls. The light from the moon and the gleam of the water grew brighter and brighter the farther he progressed, and greater and greater became the dread of what he might encounter. The end was very near now, only one or two paces more. His heart gave sickly throbs. He uttered another prayer, crossed himself again, and with a tremendous effort sprang forward, so far that he almost fell into the tarn.

In fearful apprehension he glanced around him. Lying on the ground was a white figure. It was motionless. For a few

moments Currie was far too scared to look closely at the figure. When he did so he saw to his surprise and excessive indignation that it was the London cockney, wearing a white sheet. The man was seemingly unconscious. Currie sprinkled water on his face, and when he came to gave him a little of the brandy he had brought with him.

When the cockney had recovered sufficiently to sit up, he confessed, not however before Currie, who was very angry, had threatened to thrash him, that he had come there on purpose to frighten Currie and make him lose the bet. Instead of frightening Currie he had himself, he admitted, been so badly frightened that he fainted on seeing something very dreadful come out of the tarn.

Neither then nor at any time would he describe what it was he had seen. He was so shaken that Currie had to help him get back to the hotel. He left it the next day, not before, however, he had given Currie a guinea.¹

¹ This story is factual, the names only are fictitious.

Some Scottish River Hauntings

MR. J. G. CAMPBELL, in his book *Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands*, writes of hauntings of streams in Tiree, Mull, by Glaistigs and other species of spirits that are apparently peculiar to Scotland. They vary as much in appearance as they do in behaviour. Some are young and lovely, with blue eyes and long golden hair, others are small, with long white hair and old and wrinkled faces. Some are mischievous and frolicsome, others beat and torment men. They are mostly clad in green.

Hugh Miller, in his *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland*, also narrates hauntings by phantom green lady spirits.

A Banffshire ploughman was returning home on horseback from work one autumn evening when he was accosted on the bank of a river by a tall lady in green, with her face concealed in the hood of her mantle. She asked to be taken up behind him on his horse and carried across the water. He did as she requested, and when he reached the opposite bank she leaped lightly from the horse and removed her hood, exhibiting a pale, thin face, which seemed marked, however, by the roguish, half-humorous expression of one who had just succeeded in playing off a good joke.

The ploughman was terrified to see that she was the ghost of the wife of his employer, who had been dead about six months. She told him to ride home quickly and it would not be long before he saw her again.

She proved as good as her word, for he often saw her. On one occasion she gave him money, which turned into pebbles, and on another occasion she pelted him with pellets of turf. She never appeared to her husband but visited his house frequently, sometimes teasing the servants and at other times assisting them in their work. Like so many of the Scottish spirits she seemed to be an odd mixture of a ghost and glaistig, and of the physical and superphysical.

In one of my books I mention the haunting of the River Auldgrande by a male ghost in green who terrorized the neighbourhood.

Many stories have been told of the haunting of a stream that flows through a glen in the north of Scotland known as Marial's Den. One is about a youth named William Grant. He was walking by the stream in Marial's Den one afternoon when he saw a woman in grey, wearing a hood which concealed her face. She was standing quite motionless on the far side of the stream.

There was something so queer about her that he stood and looked at her. Presently she pointed to the stream in front of her. William looked and saw in the water a picture of a garden, and standing in it a tall, pretty girl whom he recognized as his sweetheart, Mary. She was reading a letter and smiling, as if very pleased. He saw the handwriting very plainly. It was not his, and something told him that it was from a man.

The scene faded away, and presently he saw Mary and a dark, good-looking young man standing at a garden gate. They appeared to be talking very earnestly. Mary threw her arms round the young man's neck and kissed him.

The scene changed again, and he saw himself and Mary in a room, which he recognized as the parlour of her home. They were quarrelling. He was angry and seemed to be upbraiding her. She took a ring from her finger and threw it on the ground.

Again the scene changed and another rapidly succeeded it. It was in Marial's Den. Two men faced one another: they were the dark, good-looking youth and himself. Suddenly they began to struggle, and William was horrified to see his double stab the other man.

'That is all,' the woman in grey said, and vanished.

Everything came to pass just as it appeared to William in the river. Mary, whom he loved so much, jilted him. Mad with jealousy he met his rival, the dark, good-looking youth, in Marial's Den and stabbed him. Imagining that he had killed the young man he stabbed himself and died.

There is still a lingering belief in northern and western Scotland in water-nixies and water-kelpies, which resemble in some respects the Irish phookas or pookas, but they are perhaps rather more malignant. One story of an alleged haunting of a river in Forfarshire by a water-kelpie was told me when I was staying in that county many years ago.

A farm labourer was out late one night tending some cattle that were sick, when he heard a great commotion by the riverside. Hastening to see what was happening, he found his employer's horses, all huddled together, snorting and stamping, and a white form, something like a horse and something like a cow, standing close to them. He picked up a stone and threw it at it. The stone encountered nothing solid, but passed through the strange figure and fell onto the ground. The labourer knew then that it was a water-kelpie. It ran away, laughing, and leaped into the Esk, which was near the farm.

While I was still in Forfarshire I heard a legendary story about the Tay in Perthshire. On the western bank of the Tay there was once a stone, on which the natives of the locality used to offer sacrifices to their god. One day they captured a chieftain of a neighbouring tribe, stripped him, trussed him like a fowl and laid him on his back on the stone. When they had prayed to their god, a young priestess in white robes sprinkled water from the river on his face and sharpened her large, keen-edged knife.

While she was thus engaged the chieftain cursed her and declared that if she murdered him her spirit would be doomed to haunt for ever. He had hardly finished speaking before the priestess drew back his head and cut his throat. She dipped her hands in his blood and sprinkled the spectators nearest to her with it.

'That is the story,' the narrator of it said, 'and although I cannot vouch for its veracity, I have good reason to know that the spot on the bank of the Tay where the sacrificial stone is said to have stood is haunted.'

'I was passing near it one bright moonlit night, accompanied by my dog, when the animal growled, and I saw standing on

the bank of the river a woman in a loose, flowing white garment. She was very pale and had dark hair and eyes, and was holding in her long white fingers a glittering knife. She fascinated me. Seeing me staring at her, she frowned, her eyes gleamed evilly, and she advanced threateningly towards me. I crossed myself and uttered a prayer, whereupon she vanished.

‘I had to pass the spot many nights afterwards, but I never saw her again. I always felt, however, that she was never far from me, and was very thankful when I had left the river bank well in my rear.’

A farmer who owned the ground on which the stone once stood told me that he had seen the apparition several times, and that always after her appearance he had had bad luck.

Other people testified to having heard fearful cries and dreadful moans and groans, as if someone was being horribly tortured. A Presbyterian minister held a service there one evening, and after that the haunting ceased. The curse had very possibly been lifted.

Mr. William Henderson, in his *Folk Lore of the Northern Counties of England and the Borders*, refers to hauntings in the valley of the Esk by phantom hares that are thought to be the familiar spirits of witches, and quotes the following extraordinary case:

A new plantation was made in Eskdale during the last century and great havoc was done in it by hares. Many were shot but no bullet seemed to hurt one of the host of depredators until a silver bullet, made from silver coins, was used. One of these bullets struck the hare and killed it. At the moment of its death an old woman living near the Esk, who was busy spinning wool, was seen to suddenly fling up her hands and heard to exclaim: ‘They have shot my familiar spirit! What am I to do?’ She fell from her chair to the ground and expired.

There are many stories of hauntings on both banks of the Tweed. One such story was told me by Miss Hill, a lady living near Berwick. Her father, Colonel Hill, retired army officer, was walking along the Scottish bank of the Tweed one Sunday evening when he saw a man, rather strangely attired, coming

towards him. Colonel Hill was buried in thought and did not notice the man very clearly until he got near him.

He was then horrified to see the man lacked a head. Otherwise, apart from his clothes which were of the style worn in the latter part of the eighteenth century, there was nothing remarkable about the man. He walked in quite a natural manner past Colonel Hill. The Colonel turned to see where he went, and he was nowhere to be seen. He had vanished quite inexplicably.

When Colonel Hill related his uncanny experience to Mr. Smith, an old inhabitant of the district, Mr. Smith said: 'Why, that must have been the ghost known about here as Headless Jock. He used often to be seen by the Tweed when my father was a boy. So he's cropped up again. He is supposed to be the ghost of an old miller named Jock Forbes, whose headless body was found in the Tweed some time in the eighteenth century.'¹

¹ The names in this case of haunting are fictitious.

THE HAUNTED RIVERS AND
WATERS OF IRELAND

The Woman in Red

THIS narrative relating to Amelia Jenkyns and the Woman in Red has come to me in rather a roundabout way. It owes its origin to a story told to a Maunsell relation of my grandmother by Mrs. de Courcey,¹ a resident in Cork. She heard it somewhat fragmentarily from Andy O'Leary, a youth of seventeen years of age, who did errands for her and was generally regarded not quite as a moron but as rather simple. Through my grandmother the story has descended to me, and I have included it in this volume.

About the thirties of the last century there was a girl in Cork named Amelia Jenkyns. She had no parents and was in an orphanage until a Mrs. Bishop engaged her as a maid of all work. She had only one friend in the world, Andy O'Leary, who did odd jobs for Mrs. Bishop. She told him everything, and he got to know her almost as well as she knew herself, otherwise this story could not have been written.

They both admired Mrs. Bishop and thought her very beautiful, yet they stood in great awe of her and were in constant fear of giving her offence. She was generous as regards food. Andy and Amelia had all their meals together in the kitchen, and they had no cause to grumble at their fare. Amelia did the cooking.

Mrs. Bishop never had a meal in the house, only a cup of coffee early in the morning, which Amelia took to her. Where she went was a mystery to Andy and Amelia, who longed to know. Andy had heard it said that Mrs. Bishop was often seen entering the finest hotel in Cork, that she knew the richest people in the city and bought her clothes at the most expensive shops. She was always dressed very smartly. She had big, blue eyes, a slightly retroussé nose, a pretty mouth with lovely teeth,

¹ Not her real name.

yellow hair, and beautiful hands with tapering fingers and filbert nails.

Amelia took a great fancy to one of her dresses. It was a red dress with large, shining buttons all down the front of it. Andy and Amelia thought it very attractive. Mrs. Bishop had on one occasion caught Amelia examining one of her mantles that was in the hall, and had threatened to beat her if she ever touched any of her clothes again. Amelia had never forgotten the cruel look in Mrs. Bishop's eyes.

The red dress was kept in a locked room. Andy and Amelia longed to see what else was in that room. It was a great mystery to them. They also wanted to learn more about Mrs. Bishop, who was a never ceasing enigma to them.

'Do you know what Mrs. Bishop's husband was?' Amelia enquired of the milkman, who seemed to have taken a fancy to her. Anyway, to Andy's annoyance, he used to bring her flowers.

'No,' the milkman replied. 'An independent gentleman, I believe. He died abroad, so it was said. Somewhere in the South of France, where the rich folk spend the winter. He had white hair and looked old enough to be her father.'

'Was she fond of him, I wonder,' Amelia said. 'I can't imagine her being very fond of anyone.'

The milkman laughed. 'It isn't fashionable for womenfolk to be fond of their husbands nowadays,' he rejoined. 'Aren't you happy here?'

Amelia shrugged her shoulders. 'So, so, but I suppose, if I left, I might do worse.'

'Then I advise you to remain where you are,' the milkman responded. 'Anyhow, till you can hear of a better place.'

Amelia thanked him for his advice, and there it ended, at least for that day. It was soon after this conversation that she had a strange dream about the locked-up room. She thought she saw Mrs. Bishop go to a board on the right-hand side of the drawing-room fireplace, and take a key from the cavity under it. Then, key in hand, Mrs. Bishop went to the mysterious room at the end of the passage, unlocked it and entered. Amelia

dreamed she followed her as far as the door and tried to peep inside, but Mrs. Bishop was too quick for her. The door slammed to in her face, and she saw nothing but a bedstead, a black oak four-poster, standing in the middle of the room. She stood outside and listened, and presently heard the clink of coins.

'It is as I have suspected all along,' she said to herself; 'there's money in there, heaps of it. Mrs. Bishop's a miser.' She thought she put her eye to the keyhole, and that something hot and burning ran into it. The pain was so acute she awoke. The dream was so vivid, it made a great impression on her, and she became more curious than ever to see inside the room. 'If I can only get hold of some of that money,' she said to herself, 'I'll run off. London is a big city. There must be plenty of good hiding places in it, where the police would never find me. Besides, if I am caught, prison is not such a bad place, far better than the workhouse, and probably as good as this. It's worth trying anyhow.'

She waited impatiently for an opportunity to see if the dream were true, but always, just as she had screwed up the courage to go into the drawing-room and try the boards by the fireplace, something happened to prevent her. Once she fancied she heard footsteps following her stealthily across the hall to the drawing-room. She turned round in terror, fully expecting to encounter the gaze of the awe-inspiring china-blue eyes, but, to her relief and astonishment, no one was there. On another occasion, when she stole downstairs in the dead of night, she fancied she could hear footsteps creeping down the stairs after her. She made up her mind, if it was Mrs. Bishop, she would pretend she was walking in her sleep.

She had never been to the theatre, but Andy had told her about the only play he had ever seen. 'I'll play act,' she kept saying to herself, and when she arrived at the foot of the stairs, she turned slowly round and looked, but there was no one. An uncanny feeling now came over her, and it grew so strong that she ran to her room in a panic, and never ventured to leave it again in the dead of night. Then one day the long anticipated opportunity occurred.

'I am going out for the day, Amelia,' Mrs. Bishop said to her, 'and I may not be back until the evening.'

She went off in her newest gown and bonnet.

Amelia watched her turn the corner of the street, and then, after waiting a few minutes, ran to her bedroom to have a good look at her hats and clothes. There was one hat that Amelia loved. It was a real Tuscany leghorn hat. Amelia had often longed to wear it, and now was her chance. She put it on in front of the mirror. She was not a bad-looking girl, and the hat suited her. Pleased with the effect, she put on a silk dress and strutted about the room in it, continually pausing to look at herself in the mirror.

There was some rouge in a box on the dressing-table. She could not resist dabbing a little of it on her thin cheeks. Then she put on a pair of French boots with very high heels and tapped over the floor in them.

She resolved to put her dream to the test.

With a fast beating heart and many glances around her to make sure there was no sign of her greatly dreaded mistress she fetched Andy, and they both stole to the drawing-room. Amelia rapped on the door.

There was no reply. She rapped again, and on there being still no reply, she opened the door and they both entered. The sun pouring through the windows made the room so bright and cheery that Amelia quite forgot her fears and went boldly to the fireplace. She tried several boards, and then to her joyful surprise one appeared to be loose. She raised it up with one of the kitchen knives, and in the cavity under it was a key. Her dream, then, was true. 'Oh, if only the money is there,' she said to herself, 'it's good-bye to this slavery. I shall be free. Free and rich.'

Shaking with excitement, she ran off at once to the mystery room, followed by Andy, and with feverish haste inserted the key in the lock. The door opened at last, and the interior of the room was exposed to Amelia's view. In the middle of it she saw, as in her dream, an antique four-poster bed of black oak, and in one corner of the room an iron safe. Apart from these two

articles, the room contained only one or two chairs and a mirror. The mirror fascinated Amelia—mirrors always did—and she was looking at herself in it, thinking that if only she had the money to dress nicely, she might go to the theatre and hotels, when she gave an involuntary start.

The bed behind her was very clearly reflected in the mirror, and in it she and Andy saw an old man with white hair and a white moustache. He was lying on his back, apparently asleep. Suddenly, from out of the cupboard in the wall, by the fireplace, emerged a woman. It was Mrs. Bishop, and yet not Mrs. Bishop, for, like the man in the bed, there was something filmy and unreal about her. She was wearing a blue satin gown. On one of her wrists was a massive gold bracelet, and on her white fingers were sparkling jewelled rings. Amelia gazed admiringly at them. She loved jewellery, Tiptoeing with feline stealth to the bed the woman picked up a pillow, and with a dreadful expression in her blue eyes she placed the pillow very carefully over the face of the sleeping man, and pressed it down with the weight of her whole body. Amelia uttered a cry of horror, whereupon the man and the woman immediately vanished, and Amelia and Andy were once again alone in the room.

They were so shocked that it was some time before they ventured to move. Amelia felt that what she had witnessed was a ghostly re-enactment of what had actually occurred; that the old man in the bed was Mrs. Bishop's husband, and that Mrs. Bishop had murdered him.

'I'll get the money,' she said to Andy, 'and then we'll get away from here. You and I.'

Andy nodded. Amelia knew he would go anywhere with her, do anything she wished him to do.

She tried to open the safe, and after much fingering she accidentally pressed a spring, and the door flew open. The inside of the safe was full of golden coins—Amelia had never seen sovereigns—rings, bracelets, necklaces. Amelia's eyes almost fell out of her head with awe and admiration. 'My word,' she said to herself, 'here are treasures. They are real gold and real

precious stones. I know. Mrs. Bishop stole them. She's a thief as well as a murderess. That accounts for her always keeping this room locked. She's afraid of anyone finding her out. I'll try some of them on. My, how smart I shall look !'

In her excitement she forgot her fear. She slipped first one bangle on her grimy little wrist, then another, then a bracelet, and after that another. Then covered with jewellery she looked at herself in the mirror, and went into ecstasies of delight. Suddenly the door opened, and Mrs. Bishop, now in the flesh and blood, the real, physical Mrs. Bishop, wearing the entrancing red dress with the glittering, large red buttons, entered the room. Andy darted with extraordinary celerity under the bed, but Amelia was far too terrified to move. She stood rooted to the floor, trembling from head to foot.

'So,' Mrs. Bishop exclaimed, in a cold, calm, emotionless voice, 'I've caught you at last, prying into my secrets. Not content with wearing my hats, you are wearing my jewels. Take them off at once.'

Amelia obeyed her. Mrs. Bishop caught hold of her right arm, her sharp nails digging into Amelia's flesh. 'Come with me,' Mrs. Bishop said. She led Amelia out of the room and house. Andy followed them, keeping a little distance in their rear, ever alert to hide at once should Mrs. Bishop glance behind her. Through street after street they went till they came to the River Lee. Moored close alongside its shore was a small yacht.

Mrs. Bishop stepped lightly onto its deck, dragging Amelia with her. She took her into the cabin and told her to kneel in front of her. Amelia meekly knelt, she dared not disobey. The cold, blue eyes of the woman rendered her powerless. The beautiful white hands and the shining red buttons fascinated her terribly. She was like a rabbit under the hypnotic spell of a ravenous snake.

Mrs. Bishop produced a long piece of wire. 'Do you know what this is for?' she asked. Amelia shook her head. She tried to speak but her voice died in her throat. She could not utter a sound. 'You will soon find out,' Mrs. Bishop said. 'I'm going

to put it so.' And she coiled it carefully round Amelia's neck. Amelia did not move: she could not. 'You've no friends, no parents, nobody to make any enquiries about you, little drab,' Mrs. Bishop said, and she drew the wire tighter and tighter.

Andy, who had seen and heard everything—the door had not been closed properly—and, to his discredit, had been far too frightened to interfere, fled. So great was his dread of Mrs. Bishop that he dared not mention what had happened for several weeks, when he ventured to tell Mrs. de Courcey. She told the police, but they pooh-poohed the idea of Mrs. Bishop having murdered anyone. They questioned Andy, who was very scared and gave such a confused version of what he had told Mrs. de Courcey that the police did not regard it seriously.

They, nevertheless, interrogated Mrs. Bishop, and believed her when she told them, with every appearance of sincerity, that Amelia had run away, a thing she had done on two previous occasions, and that she, Mrs. Bishop, had no idea of Amelia's whereabouts. No further steps were taken in the matter.

Some weeks elapsed before Amelia's body was found in the Lee, and it was then far too decomposed to show she had met her death other than by drowning. Mrs. Bishop left Cork soon after the discovery of the body, and was never known to visit that city again. What ultimately became of her no one in Cork knew or cared. She had made few acquaintances and no friends, at least none of any social standing.

For many months the River Lee at Cork was haunted nightly by the phantom of a young, poorly clad girl in black, with a white face and very scared look in her eyes.

Stag-headed Men of Hate

THE following story of a very queer haunting was told me one day in the nineties, when I was living in Dublin, by an old sailor named Patrick Ryan.¹

It was Christmas Eve in the fifties of the last century, close on midnight, and most of the inhabitants of Waterford were in bed. In a small house close to the river Ryan's cousin, Eli Hayson, was trying his hardest to go to sleep.

He heard suddenly the footsteps of someone running at a great speed along the waterfront. There was something so peculiar about the footsteps that he got up and looked out of the window. It was a bright moonlight night and every object on the quay stood out, almost as clearly revealed as in the daytime.

Several small vessels were at moorage in the river. Racing towards the house from the river was a young man in a guernsey and blue trousers. Something in his build and manner of running seemed familiar, but it was not until he was within a few yards of the house, and the moonlight illuminated his very white face, that Eli recognized him.

He was his twin brother, Jack, who he thought was in the vessel *Thomas Emery* at Cork. He was about to call out to him to ask how he got there when he saw several shadowy figures rise from the water and steal furtively after Jack. He opened his mouth to shout and warn Jack but his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth and his voice died in his throat. Jack rushed at the door and tried to wrench it open. The shadowy forms closed in on him and clutched hold of him with their long, ugly arms. Jack screamed, 'For heaven's sake save me!' His face was convulsed with terror so great and appalling that his features were hardly recognizable.

¹ *Empire News*, 1921.

The moon disappeared behind a bank of dark clouds, and when they cleared away Jack and the shadowy figures were nowhere to be seen. Eli, frightened and perplexed, went back to bed and presently fell asleep.

The day after Boxing Day Eli's father received a letter from the Captain of the *Thomas Emery* saying that Jack had fallen overboard, while walking in his sleep, and had been drowned.

Mr. Hayson went to the inquest at Cork and said Jack had never been known at home to walk in his sleep. Several of the crew of the *Thomas Emery*, however, swore that they had constantly seen him get out of his bunk while asleep and walk about the ship. A verdict of 'Found Drowned' was returned.

The Hayson family were very far from satisfied and were convinced that Eli's ghostly vision strongly suggested that Jack had met with foul play. They made exhaustive enquiries about the Captain and crew of the *Thomas Emery*, and were ceaseless in their endeavours to find anyone who could give them any information about what happened on the night Jack was alleged to have walked in his sleep, but it was of no avail.

Years passed. Mr. and Mrs. Hayson died, and Eli was left alone. He often thought of his strange experience on that eventful Christmas Eve, but he had long abandoned all hope of solving the mystery of his brother's death, and was genuinely surprised when a possible explanation to it was suddenly brought to his notice. He was sitting one evening in the parlour of a small hotel in Cork, where he was well known, when the landlord suddenly remarked, 'By the way, there's an old man in the town who knows something that may interest you.'

'What's it about?' Eli asked at once.

'Cork,' the landlord replied guardedly. 'I advise you to visit him and not delay too long, as, from all accounts, he is in a very poor way.'

He gave Eli the old man's address, and Eli called on him that very night. At first the old man, whose name was Matthew Webster, was not very willing to talk, but, after some persuasion, he at length told his story.

'It really concerns my boy, Tom,' he began. 'He will have

been dead eight weeks come next Wednesday. Well, one night—I forget whether it was Christmas Eve or Christmas Day now, my memory has got so queer—about twenty years ago, he was on night duty on the quay of a certain town.’

‘Cork?’ Eli ventured.

‘I can’t give no names,’ Matthew replied, ‘I promised Tom I wouldn’t, and no one in our family ever breaks their word. Never been known to.’

‘Well, at about the beginning of the middle watch, about midnight I mean, Tom, who was sitting in front of a shed by the side of a brazier, dozing, was suddenly aroused by the sound of footsteps. He got up, and peeping cautiously round the side of the shed, for he was ever on the look-out for thieves, saw, to his amazement, three extraordinary figures stealing silently and stealthily from out of the gloom towards the water’s edge. Though their bodies were like men’s, and clad in ordinary sailors’ togs, their heads were not human at all, but were the heads of animals—stags, and a very queer kind of ape.

‘The sight of these strange beings was altogether so unexpected and alarming that Tom was for a moment or so terrified, but, curiosity at length overcoming fear, he crept out of his hiding-place and followed them.

‘Down the steep and slippery quay steps they went, and, stepping into a boat that lay alongside, they rowed off in the direction of a schooner that lay at her moorings about a hundred yards from the shore.

‘Tom watched them board the schooner, and, as soon as they were out of sight, he jumped into another boat and boarded the schooner, too, concealing himself behind a pile of gear and casks that lay in the stern of the vessel.

‘He hadn’t been more than a few seconds in this position, when he heard loud shrieks of terror, accompanied by the most blood-curdling moans and groans, and, presently, up the companion ladder there came a young man about Tom’s age, racing for his life. He was followed by the grotesque trio that had just boarded the schooner.

‘The moon was up at the time, and Tom could see the

awful look of terror in the youth's face as he shrieked out: 'Save me. For God's sake save me!'

Tom rushed out from his hiding-place, but, before he could reach him, the youth, with a frenzied cry of horror, had jumped overboard. Tom was a powerful swimmer, and could have saved the youth, but was prevented by the trio, who seized him and held him fast, thus proving themselves not ghosts, but only men of flesh and blood like himself.

'Tom then saw that the animals' heads were merely mummers' masks, and it did not take him long to discover the whole affair was simply a diabolical plot to get rid of the youth, who, for some reason Tom could not even guess at, had incurred the bitter animosity of his fellow-seamen.

'The youth was obviously of a very nervous and highly strung disposition, and the trio had come on board in masks, evidently masquerading as ghosts, to frighten him to death.

'Two of them were for killing Tom outright, but the third, who seemed to possess a certain amount of authority, persuaded them to spare him, on condition that he took his most solemn oath that he would never tell a soul what he had seen and heard that night. Tom took the oath, and, after they had told him what would happen to him should he divulge the secret, they allowed him to go.'

'And you say this happened about twenty years ago?' Eli observed, when old Matthew paused. 'Can you give me the date?'

'Yes, I think so,' Matthew said, tottering feebly to an ancient chest-of-drawers and extracting from it a small pocket-book. 'December 24th.'

'I thought so,' Eli replied tremulously. 'That is the exact date of my brother Jack's death.'

Some Irish Lake Hauntings

THERE are many traditional ghost stories and legends about the Irish lakes.

At a remote period of Irish history King Fergus of Ulster was kidnapped by fairies, who were charmed by his beauty. He seized one of them and refused to liberate her until they granted him the power to roam safely and freely under seas, rivers and lakes. They granted him what he wanted but on the condition that he never visited the depths of Lake Ruaighre. He agreed, and liberated the fairy whom he had seized.

One day, oblivious of his promise not to enter the depths of the forbidden lake, he went and encountered the horrible monster that dwelt there. On seeing it his mouth became distended to both ears and his great beauty was destroyed. He was transformed into a caricature of his former self.

He fled out of the lake, returned to his domains and wanted to resign the throne, but some wise men whom he consulted advised him to stick to it. He went again to the lake, fought the monster, slew it, and regained his beauty.¹

Near the mountain of Croagh Patrick there is a lake which is rumoured to be haunted by very malevolent spirits that have an evil influence over certain people.

Under Lough Neagh there is supposed to be a lovely invisible domain inhabited by fairies, whose merry laughter can be heard on still nights.

In Clare there is a small lake called Tier-Mac-Bran. It is in a very wild and romantic part of the county, the home of my forbears. Great cliffs surround it, on the summit of one of which are the ruins of an ancient castle. No streams flow into or out of the lake, and how it gets its constant flow of water is a mystery. It is said to be unfathomable. The following strange legend is related of it:

¹ *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*, by P. Kennedy.

Centuries ago Fuenvicouil (Fingal) set out from his castle one day, accompanied by some of his chieftains, to hunt in the land in close proximity to Mount Callaw. A beautiful white hart, with horns and hoofs of gleaming gold, suddenly emerged from a bush, and, seeing Fingal, at once fled. Fingal, his companions and hounds at once pursued it. Hour after hour they chased the hart, which sped on with unabated vigour. One by one all the hunters and hounds dropped off exhausted, except Fingal and his favourite hound, Bran.

Just as the sun was setting the hart reached the edge of the cliff on which the castle stood. It paused for a moment and then leaped down into the green lake. Without any hesitation Bran sprang after it. No sooner, however, did the hart touch the water than it vanished, and in its place appeared a lovely golden-haired woman in white, who caught hold of Bran and sank with him into the depths of the lake. The cliff from which Bran sprang was henceforth known as Craig-a-Bran, and the castle (then whole) as Tier-Mac-Bran, or the lordship of Bran. The lake has always been thought to be haunted, and for many years few people ventured near it after nightfall or dared to fish in it even in the daytime.

Lough Derg is said to be haunted by several ghosts, but none of them, so far as I can ascertain, have been seen in recent years. About fifty years ago a phantom boat, with no visible being in it, was rumoured to appear on the lake in the dead of night. The sound of oars dipping in the water and weird voices and music were heard coming from it as it moved swiftly over the deep, dark water. A man standing on the shore of the lake, in a fit of bravado, threw a stone at the phantom boat, and the stone was thrown back at him at once with great violence, accompanied by peals of mocking laughter, which so frightened him that he fled.

In *All the Year Round*, April 1870, there is a story by Miss Anne Baily of the haunting of Lough Guir, in the County of Limerick. The great Earl of Desmond, notorious as a magician and famous for his doughty deeds in battle, brought to his castle one day his young and lovely bride. They had not been

long in it when she came one morning to the chamber where he studied the black art, and implored him to let her see some of the wonderful things he was said to do. He resisted her entreaties for some time but in the end he yielded, not before, however, he had told her not to speak or utter a sound while he was experimenting.

Muttering a spell as he stood before her, feathers sprouted thickly over him, his face became contracted and hooked, a cadaverous smell filled the air, and, with heavy, winnowy wings, a huge vulture rose in his stead and swept round the room, threatening every now and then to pounce on the Countess, who, with a tremendous effort, remained calm. Not a sound did she utter. The vulture alighted near the door and in a moment changed into a horribly deformed, dwarfish hag, with yellow skin hanging about her face, and enormous glaring eyes. She moved on crutches towards the Countess, her mouth foaming, and her grimaces and contortions becoming more and more hideous.

Suddenly she paused, when within a few feet of the Countess, and fell yelling on to the floor. No sooner had she done so than she turned into a huge snake, with crest erect and quivering tongue. Just as the snake seemed about to dart at the Countess it changed into her husband, who stood before her with his finger on his lip and signalled to her to continue silent. He then lay on the floor and began to stretch himself out and out, growing longer and longer until his head extended to one end of the room and his feet to the other.

The Countess's fortitude gave way at last and she screamed, whereupon the castle sank immediately into Lough Guir, the waters of which lapped its walls.

One night in every seven years the ghosts of the Earl of Desmond and his lovely wife emerge on horseback from the lake and ride across it. At the break of day they return to the depths of the lake, where they are doomed to remain until the silver shoes of the Earl's steed are worn out.

The lake, until recent years at any rate, was believed to be haunted by several much more modern spirits.

Mr. Kennedy, in his book *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts* relates the following story of Lake Inchiquin:

Where Lake Inchiquin is now there was once a level stretch of land, on which stood a castle. Under the castle there was an unexplored cavern, and near its entrance was a well. The Lord of the Castle, hearing that three lovely women came from the cave and bathed in the well, hid himself in order to see them. He allowed the first two women to pass by him, but seized the third and refused to let her go until she consented to marry him. This she did, provided he promised never to invite people to the castle. He promised, and they were married.

One day he asked her to let him go to some races. With her permission, reluctantly given, he went to them on his favourite horse, and returned to the castle alone. He went again the next day, and again came back alone. He went to the races again on the third day, got drunk, and was helped home by some of his friends.

Directly his wife saw him, her love for him ended and she went to the mysterious cave and disappeared within its depths. The water from the spring rose immediately and immersed the Lord of the Castle and all within the castle and the whole surrounding estate. It was then and thus that Lake Inchiquin originated.

There are almost enough traditional ghost and legendary stories about Killarney to fill a book. The most famous of the many ghosts said to have haunted it from time to time are the phantoms of the O'Donohue, mounted on his white horse, accompanied by a host of his relatives, friends and retainers. They ride round the lake every eve of May-day to the sound of ghostly music. Several people have told me that when they have stood on the shore of Killarney they have heard sweet, entrancing music coming from its depths.

The ruins of Ross Castle on the shore of Killarney and the old Weir Bridge are both reputed to be still haunted at times.

A County Limerick Haunting

THIS story of a haunted valley in County Limerick was told to my grandmother, Sally Vize of Limerick, by one of her Maunsell relations, who vouched for its veracity.

On sitting down to his breakfast a few days before Christmas Val Daincourt¹ found two letters awaiting him. Both bore the Limerick postmark, but whereas the handwriting on the one was obviously that of some very old person, equally obviously the firm yet delicately formed handwriting on the other was that of a young girl possibly still in her teens. A smile of delight broke out all over Val's face as he looked at them. 'I'll read this one first,' he said, picking up one of the envelopes, 'and keep hers till last.'

He broke open the seal and hurriedly glanced through the contents. As he had anticipated, it was from his aunt, Miss Matilda Daincourt, inviting him to spend Christmas week with her in the country. After giving him lengthy instructions how to get to Limerick from London, she added: 'Unfortunately, my horses are temporarily disabled—one has picked up a stone and is lame, and the other has a slight touch of pneumonia. I'm afraid you'll have to charter a trap from the station. There is a choice of routes, there being two ways of getting here, but for reasons which I will explain later, I must ask you to insist on coming by the High Road, which, although two or three miles the longer road, we always choose at this time of year especially.'

'That means another ten shillings on top of the railway fare,' Val ejaculated, pulling rather a long face, 'though I dare say the old dear will refund me. She's so generous.'

He now opened the other letter, and, as he did so, his whole face beamed. It was from Doris Daincourt, his pretty, nineteen-year-old cousin, who lived with her aunt, and whom he was fondly hoping one day to marry. After begging him to come, as

¹ All names in this story told by a Maunsell are fictitious.

she simply pined for 'a real jolly Christmas, with plenty of fun, to compensate for an exceedingly dull and uneventful autumn', she added in a postscript: 'Whatever you do, Val, drive from the station the way auntie tells you. She has her reasons.'

Val laughed a trifle sceptically, and after kissing the letter several times with the usual fervour slipped it, together with his aunt's, in his breast pocket. He then turned to a cold breakfast—and the time-table.

Twenty minutes later, carrying a portmanteau and overcoat, he was striding with feverish haste to Euston, and was stopped, just as he was about to cross the road at the entrance to the courtyard, by an old woman begging. Angry at being delayed, even for a second, he shook his head savagely, and was hurrying on, when something in the old woman's appearance moved his compassion, and he gave her half a crown, which was the smallest change he had on him.

'May the Saints preserve you for that, sorr,' she cried, 'and it is you who will be needing their protection before long. I can see it in your face. Here, take this,' and putting her hand in her pocket she drew out a black bog-oak cross. 'It was given me last Christmas by Father O'Callaghan of Limerick.'

'No,' Val said, 'I don't want your cross, but thanks all the same.'

The old woman persisted, however. 'Keep it, your honour,' she pleaded. 'It will act as a charm against all evil, and so long as you have it on you no harm will come to you.'

She thrust it in his hands, and Val, not knowing how else to get away from her, took it and put it in his waistcoat pocket. He then thanked her again and hurried on. After a long and tiresome journey, for there were many changes, Val at length stood on the platform of Limerick station.

It was Christmas Eve and nearly dark, and to his intense dismay the cabmen, one and all, refused to drive him to his aunt's. It was too far away, they pleaded, and the roads were too bad. He was finally on the point of setting off on foot when a man in livery came up to him and said, 'If you wouldn't mind riding in an open conveyance, sir, I will take you to Miss

Daincourt's. It is on my way home.' Val, of course, jumped at the offer, and the result was he speedily found himself seated beside the man in a jaunting-car.

'Are you going by the high road?' he enquired, suddenly remembering his aunt's message.

'No, sir,' was the reply, 'that's a long way round, and I've got to be home at eight. As it is, it will be just as much as I can do to get there.'

Val did not like to remonstrate. Indeed, he did not see how he could very well under the circumstances, and consequently he let the matter drop, thinking to himself that it really wasn't of very much consequence after all. When they left the station the afternoon was well on the wane, and the dying sunbeams were shedding their lurid rays from beneath huge piles of wintry clouds which hung over the horizon when they came to the end of a long stretch of absolutely level road and were on the brow of a steep declivity. The horse then halted, and with such abruptness that Val was all but jerked from his seat.

'What's the matter with the animal?' he exclaimed. 'What made it do that?'

'I dunno, sir,' the driver replied, flicking his whip and speaking coaxingly to the horse, 'but it always acts queer like just at this spot.'

'Doesn't like the hill, I suppose,' Val commented. 'It does look a bit steep.'

'Mebbe, sir,' the driver replied, still coaxing the horse and flicking his whip rather more energetically.

'What do you call this place?' Val enquired.

'Down there?' the man said, pointing his whip at the thickly wooded valley beneath them. 'Shot Hollow.'

'Shot Hollow!' Val ejaculated. 'That's an odd name. What is the origin of it?'

The man, however, made no reply. He was evidently intent on urging the horse forward by speaking to it and giving it occasional sharp flicks with the whip. At length it moved, and slowly, very slowly, they began to descend into the gorge. At every step the horse took the gloom increased, until at length

the roadway was barely discernible, while the silence became unbroken, save for the clatter of the horse's hoofs and the rumble, rumble of the jaunting-car's wheels, which, sounding with unusual distinctness on the hard rock soil, awoke a thousand and one reverberating echoes. The valley, indeed, lay so low that even the wind, which had swept with great force across the plateau they had lately been traversing, was now scarcely perceptible.

On reaching the bottom of the decline a transformation, however, was brought by the sudden appearance of the moon. Shining forth in great brilliancy, it lit up the surrounding country, and a wilder, more haggard, and less homely looking landscape Val had never seen. The road in front of them abruptly expanded, and on either side of it were misshapen masses of stone lying in thick profusion and gleaming a ghostly white in the moonbeams, while the brawling of a neighbouring torrent fell harshly on the ears.

After driving through this scenery for some minutes they at length reached a point where the stream intersected the road and was crossed by a rude, wooden bridge. Here a catastrophe very nearly occurred. The horse shied, and so suddenly and unexpectedly that Val was all but thrown from his seat into the road, and then, before he had time to fully recover himself, the animal plunged and began racing over the bridge at a breakneck speed. By degrees, however, the driver succeeded in curbing it—to some extent, at least—and then Val, who was leaning forward and staring somewhat anxiously ahead of him, became aware of some object in front of them, moving slowly and steadily on through the uncertain gloom.

At such an hour and in such a drear wilderness this was an event calculated to challenge attention, and Val, after gazing fixedly at the thing for some minutes, at last came to the conclusion that it was a man wearing a white cape or cloak, but no hat, and carrying in one hand what looked like a thick stick. However, what was really astonishing was the fact that, although the man was on foot and walking at an ordinary pace, he still kept ahead of the horse and jaunting-car, the horse, in

spite of its gallop, being apparently quite incapable of overtaking him.

Unable to restrain his curiosity, Val at length put his hands to his mouth and shouted: 'Ho, there. Who are you?' But the man did not turn round, nor did it give any indication whatever that it had heard. A strange, uncanny feeling now for the first time stole over Val, and he unconsciously shifted nearer in his seat to the driver, who was clinging on to the reins with a terrible expression of grim determination and terror in his eyes. On and on they tore, the strange man still maintaining the same distance ahead of them, with the same curiously mechanical stride, while the intense stillness was unbroken, saving for the rumble of the vehicle and ceaseless clatter of the horse's hoofs.

Presently there came a change in the landscape. There were no longer rocks on either side of the road, but, in their stead, a pool, the surface of which shone like a polished mirror. The man now stopped and stood by the pool. A gruesome blue light surrounded him, and Val fully realized for the first time that the strange individual was not of this world but an apparition. What he had taken for a white coat was a ragged shirt, and what he had thought was a stick was a gun with a long, gleaming barrel. It fascinated Val. The apparition threw down the gun with a gesture of despair, and with a wild look in its eyes that haunted Val for many a day afterwards, plunged into the pool and disappeared.

The horse, which had halted when the apparition had halted, at once leaped forward and bore Val quickly to his destination. The pace at which they had been travelling had at times been so terrific and the road so rutty and rocky that it was a marvel they had avoided an accident. It made Val wonder if he owed his salvation to the bog-oak cross the old Irish woman in London had insisted on giving him.

On arriving at his aunt's home he found Doris overwhelmed with grief. While he was on his way to the house his aunt had fallen downstairs and injured herself. One of the servants had gone at once for the doctor. When he arrived and had examined

Miss Daincourt he said the accident, although serious considering her age—she was nearly eighty—was not as bad as had been feared. She was much shaken but no bones were broken. She would have to lie in bed for some days.

When she was able to speak she exclaimed: 'It was Flynn. I saw him as I fell.'

It was not until two days after she had said this that Val told Doris about his experience in Shot Hollow.

Doris listened with great interest. 'The apparition that you saw,' she said, 'was undoubtedly that of poor Flynn, who is well known to haunt the Hollow and pool. Forty years ago, soon after Auntie came to live here, she had a gardener named Flynn, who was continually getting drunk. She warned him time after time that unless he ceased his intemperate habits he would have to leave. Her warnings had no effect, and at last, losing patience with him, she discharged him. The following day he came and besought her to take him on again, promising very earnestly to give up drinking. Auntie, however, refused, whereupon Flynn said, as he turned to leave the house, "If you had only given me another trial I would have turned over a new leaf. Now there is nothing left for me but starvation and suicide. I swear that if there is a hereafter, I will have my revenge. Whenever Christmas comes you will remember me, and in the end I'll be even with you." And it looks,' Doris said, 'as if Flynn had kept his word, for an accident or some kind of trouble has very often happened at Christmas.'

'The sooner you get away from here the happier I shall be,' Val said.

'Rejoice: then,' Doris laughed, 'for Auntie has at last consented to sell this house, and as soon as she has found anyone who will buy it, we are going to live in Dublin.'

'Thank heaven for that,' Val said. 'And in the meanwhile keep this.' He handed her the black bog-oak cross the old Irish woman had given him. 'I believe it saved me from harm, and maybe it will save you from harm too.'

The Phantom Haze

THIS is an account of a haunting in Leinster in the sixties of the last century.

Tom Stephens, whom I met in my young days in Dublin, was on a walking tour in Leinster. He had spent an enjoyable week in Dublin and was now on his way to the town of Galway, where lived one of his greatest friends.

He had crossed the Bog of Allen, then a russet region of brown turf and stagnant water, which made progress difficult and even at times dangerous, when it began to pour with rain and became so dark that he could only see a few yards ahead of him. Fortunately the storm was of very brief duration, and when it passed he espied a little distance away one of the cabins which were numerous in so many parts of rural Ireland at that date.

On reaching it he found to his disappointment that it was tenantless and in a ruinous condition. There was no door, no glass in the window, the roof was half off, and rain-sodden earth for a floor. No cabin could have been in a more deplorable state. The front of it faced a tract of level land of gloomy sterility, void of trees or bushes and sprinkled lavishly with pools of water, stained purple, crimson or black by the peat that bordered them. The only sign of life was a black Irish hare that started up from behind a stone and scudded across the swampy ground. Beyond the land a river wound its slightly sinuous course through the desolate scenery.

Stephens, as he leaned against the rotting boards of the miserable cabin and munched the sandwiches he had brought with him, viewed the landscape and thought he had never seen such a depressing, doleful prospect. Wherever he looked the same scene met his eyes—stretches of barren, waste ground, flecked here and there with miniature quagmires and a few small turf-stacks.

His attention was drawn suddenly to the river. A black haze was rising from one small section of it. It was like a fog and yet not a fog. It perplexed him. He could not imagine what it could be. He had never seen anything like it and it gave him an eerie feeling. It wavered to and fro for some seconds as if undecided in which direction to go. Then it started to move towards him. Slowly, furtively and noiselessly it came, a tall, shapeless, black cloud, impenetrable to the eyes and indefinable.

The nearer it drew to Stephens the more and more he felt that it was not mere vapour, that it contained the eyes and mind of a very strange spirit entity. He could not tell as yet if that entity was evil.

It so interested and fascinated him that he could not remove his eyes from it, and he watched it creeping nearer and nearer to the cabin. He tried to move, to shrink out of its way, but he was limb-tied and was forced to remain where he stood, watching it drawing closer and closer to him, still black, vague and impenetrable. A haze with a mentality.

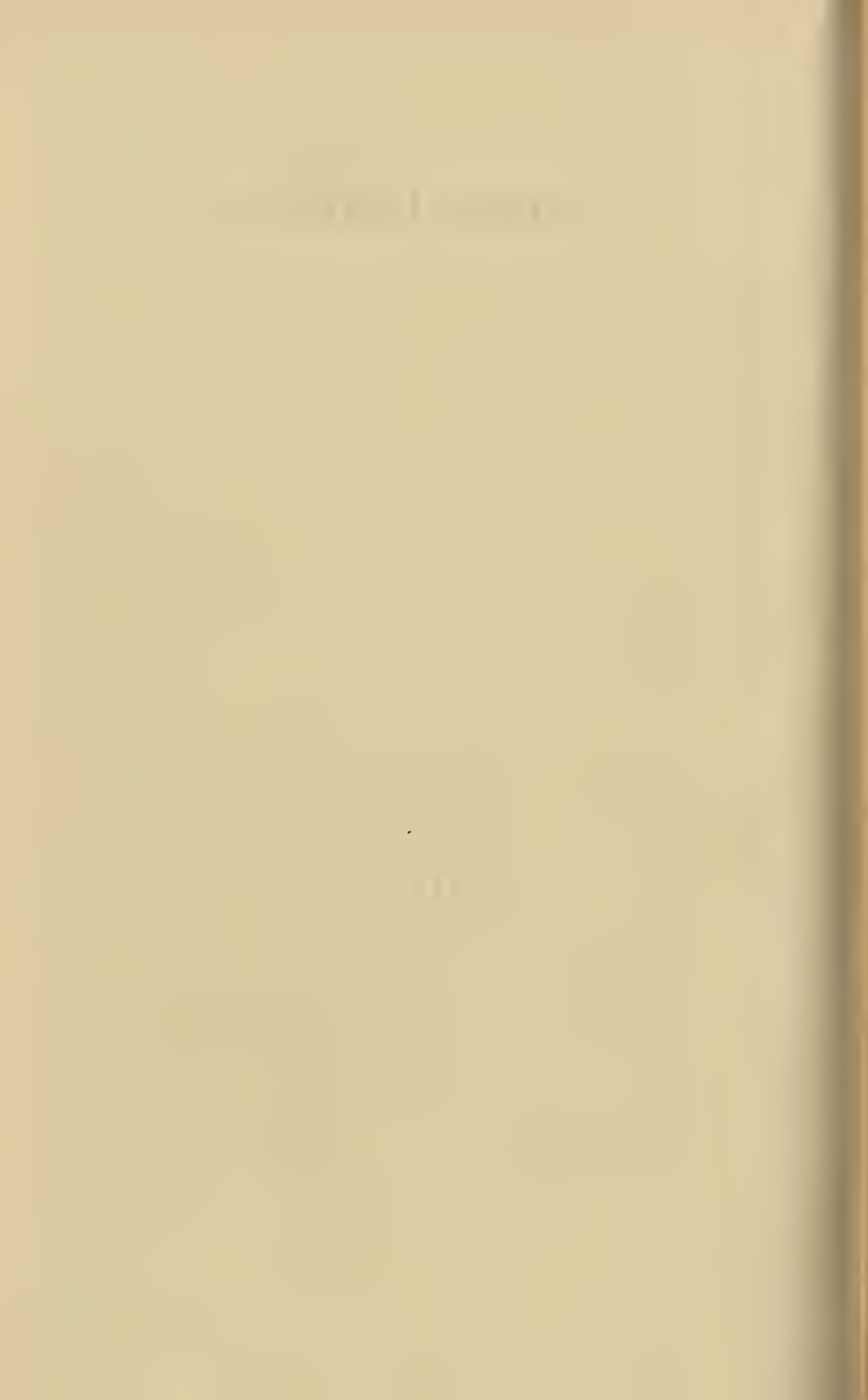
It reached him at last. He was powerless to ward it off. It was as tall as the cabin, and unsubstantial, immaterial and scentless, yet with arms; arms that seized him and thrust him gently aside as the haze passed through the cabin.

Stephens stood still for some moments and then ran to see where the haze had gone. It was moving in the direction of the great Bog of Allen. He watched till it disappeared in the distant gloom and shadows.

It had given him the impression that shrouded within it was a spirit belonging to the river; a melancholy, sexless, elemental spirit characteristic rather more than in a mere measure of the desolate, doleful district. It infected him with its sadness and restlessness.

He gobbled down his few remaining sandwiches and continued on his way to Galway.

MISCELLANEOUS



A Haunted Jamaican Lava Stream

IN the close and wood-bound vale of Pedro, situated in the parish of St. Ann, and nearly in the centre of the island of Jamaica, stood a small and lonely turret, dignified by its northern architect with the name of Edinburgh Castle. It commanded the only pass leading directly from the south side of the island to the north: the defile is scarcely a hundred yards across; and the mountains which enclose the solitary vale arise on either side to an almost Alpine height.

On this spot, which might have been selected for a new Thermopylae, there dwelt a wretch whose birth disgraced the 'land of the mountain and the flood'. His name was Hutchinson. He possessed a few negroes, acquired a small property, and first stocked it with the strayed or stolen cattle of his neighbours. His slaves were the participators of his crimes; they were recently from Africa; their native habits were familiarized with the sight of blood; and the mistaken sense of duty, if not their characteristic cruelty, taught them silence and submission, though the dark and midnight crime of assassination stains not the nature of the unprovoked African. Yet no traveller who attempted that defile, however poor or wretched he might be, ever escaped the confines of their owner's narrow territory.

The needy wanderer would sometimes call for refreshment at the only habitation which for many miles had cheered his weary eye, but it was the last he was destined ever to behold. The wealthy passenger was alike the mark and victim of his unerring aim, from a loop-hole under which he was compelled to pass. A thick-set hedge of log-wood had also been so prepared by the roadside, at a short distance from the house, that while he could detain in conversation anyone who might pass during the time that he was engaged in his cattle-fold hard by, his slaves from behind the fence could leisurely take aim at the devoted victim. It was not, however, money which the mur-

derer thus sought. A savage disposition, wrought perhaps by some injury inflicted on him in early life, an unnatural detestation of the human race, could be gratified only by the sight of blood and the contemplation of human agony; for if his destined victim were infirm, or sick, he carefully revived his strength; or if he could behold him first in fancied security, in a convivial assembly, or perhaps happy in the bosom of his family, it gave him greater satisfaction to inflict the blow which cut him off, and increased his appetite to relish the expiring struggle.

To enjoy the gory spectacle, he first dis severed the ghastly head from the palpitating body: his most pleasing occupation was to whet his streaming knife; the gloomy temper of his soul was sated only by a copious flow of blood; and when he could no longer gaze upon the decaying countenance, he placed it high in the air, in the hollow trunk of a cotton tree, where vultures might complete the horrid deed. The mangled carcass was thrown down one of those deep and hollow drains which are peculiar to mountainous countries of volcanic origin, and whose mouths, descending perpendicularly, conduct the torrents, which periodically fall, to the level of the ocean. Nor were his crimes for many years suspected, though his society was shunned; so artfully did he contrive to conceal a character which otherwise might have been charitably pronounced insane.

Justice, however, was at length gratified by the punishment of the guilty monster. Callendar, the manager of a property in the same vale, had suffered much from the depredations of the cattle which strayed from the castle, and having driven some back to their owner, requested that they might not be allowed to so trespass again. Whether Hutchinson was not prepared for the visit, or whether he only waited for a more gratifying display of cruelty, does not appear; but Callendar was hospitably entertained, and dismissed with assurances which satisfied him. The murderer returned his visit; and with apparent cordiality passed the day with him. But his victim was watched, and as he shortly afterwards rode past the fatal hedge, a rifle

bullet stretched him on the earth. An unsuspecting victim confined to his bed in the turret above beheld the transaction, and effected his timely escape. The assassin was unmasked, and fled: the whole country was alarmed, and in pursuit; when no less than forty-seven watches were found in his chests, and the number of persons who, within a few years, had strangely disappeared, it raised an immediate suspicion of their fate.

The unfathomable charnel-house, which Hutchinson had imagined would not give up its dead, was searched upon the information of one of the guilty slaves; and, suspended on the point of a projecting rock, at the depth of many feet, was discovered, by the help of a bundle of lighted straw, the mangled body of the unfortunate Callendar. The abyss which yawned below had more effectually received his other victims.

Hutchinson, in the meantime, escaped to sea in an open boat, from the port of Old Harbour. He succeeded in reaching a vessel under sail; and when the vigilance of Sir George Rodney intercepted his flight, he threw himself into the waves, from whence he was rescued for a still more ignominious end. The enormity of his crimes might be exceeded by his hardened insolence before his judges; but his reckless gaze upon the instrument which was to convey him before the tribunal of his Maker finds no parallel in the history of crime or punishment: nor can the annals of human depravity equal the fact that, at the foot of the scaffold, he left a hundred pounds in gold to erect a monument and to inscribe the marble with a record of his death.

For a long time after his death the lava drain into which he had thrown the bodies of his victims was reputed to be haunted, not only by his ghost but in addition the ghosts of the poor wretches he had murdered.¹

¹ The above account of his crimes is mainly from *The Annals of Jamaica*, by the Rev. Mr. Bridges and from the *Pocket Magazine*, 1829.

Escaped From Justice

THE following story, told in the first person, relates the ghostly experience of an American gentleman in the United States one night in the late sixties of the last century:

One bitter night in January I was the only passenger in the last car of a long train. I felt tired and was settling down to doze when the conductor entered the car and asked for my ticket.

'It's a dreadful night,' I remarked to the conductor, feeling with stiffened fingers for my ticket in the breast pocket of my coat.

'Dreadful, sir,' he said feelingly. 'We haven't had such a night since a year ago come the second of February, when Tom Blakeslee, the baggage-master, froze both his feet, and a woman got off at one of our stopping places with her baby in her arms, a corpse.'

'Frozen to death?'

He nodded. 'Yes, frozen to death, and she never thought, poor thing, but that it was asleep. 'My baby's cold,' she said, 'but we'll soon warm it when we get home.' It was just such a night as this.' And he left me.

As soon as he was gone I wrapped myself up as best I could and again tried to go to sleep. When I opened my eyes I was no longer alone in the car. Sitting opposite to me was a slender young girl in a grey blanket shawl, wearing a neat little travelling hat of grey straw, trimmed with stone-coloured velvet flowers.

'Does this train go to Bayswater?' she asked, in a voice so deliciously soft and sweet that I was entranced.

'Yes,' I said. 'Can I be of any service to you?'

She shook her head. 'Oh, no—at least, not until we reach Bayswater. I would like a carriage then.'

'We shall not be there for three hours.'

'Do we stop many times before we get there?'

‘Not once.’

She drew a deep sigh, seemingly of relief, and settled back in her corner.

By the light of the lamp that hung in its brass fixture opposite I could see her face. It was that of a lovely child. Apparently she was not more than sixteen years of age, with large blue eyes, golden hair drawn away from her face, and a rosy mouth like that of a cherub. On one of her hands there was no glove. It was as lovely as her face—white, with long, tapering fingers and glossy, filbert nails.

‘Do you expect friends to meet you at Bayswater?’ I asked.

‘No,’ she replied. ‘I am going to school there.’

‘It will be an awkward hour for you to arrive by yourself—one in the morning,’ I said.

She gave an artless little laugh. ‘Oh, I am not afraid. I shall go straight to the seminary.’

The express train thundered on with steady, ceaseless pulsing at its iron heart, and a constant roar. Suddenly the signal whistle sounded and the train began to slow down. I rubbed the frost from the window pane and looked out. We had stopped at a lonely little wayside station in the midst of dense pine woods.

‘Is this Bayswater?’ It was the soft voice of the pretty girl.

‘No,’ I said. ‘I can’t imagine why we are stopping here.’

‘Does this train stop at every station?’ she asked again. Her voice trembled.

‘Never, generally,’ I replied. ‘They must have been especially signalled here. You are cold.’

‘It is cold,’ she said, in a scarcely audible tone, drawing her shawl round her. ‘Oh, I wish they would hurry on.’

‘We are moving once more,’ I said.

The conductor entered the car, but rather to my surprise it was not the same conductor who had asked to see my ticket. I enquired why we had stopped.

‘To pick up a man,’ he said. ‘A detective. He’s on the look out for someone.’

‘Not on this train?’

'He thinks it possible.'

'What was the crime?'

'Murder.'

We had conversed in very low tones, and now he left me and went into the next car.

'Did you hear what he said?' I asked the girl.

She nodded. 'Yes, a murder. Oh, how horrible!' She looked very pale.

I told her not to be frightened, that I would protect her. She smiled sweetly. I felt so sorry for her. She was so young, so unsophisticated, so innocent, and all alone.

The train was slackening speed. We were nearing Bayswater. The girl rose, ran lightly to the nearest door and, before I could stop her, leaped out of the train. I heard a splash. We were on a bridge that spanned a wide river. I was so shocked that I suppose I fainted. At any rate I lost consciousness.

When I came to I found myself back in my seat, alone in the car. The train was rumbling steadily on. I concluded I must have been dreaming, yet it was all so terribly vivid. Presently the conductor came, this time the first conductor, and I told him my queer experience, fully expecting that he would laugh; but he was very interested.

'Yours was no ordinary dream,' he said. 'What you have told me actually took place in this very train six years ago. A girl just like you described, I knew her well by sight, committed a very horrible murder in the town where I live. She tried to escape and, to avoid being arrested, jumped out of the train when it was crossing the bridge over the river just outside Bayswater. She was drowned. The conductor who was on the train at the time told me all about it. You could not have described what happened more accurately if you had really seen it.'¹

¹ This account of a haunting is based on a story, presumably true, that was published in an early number of *The Boys of England*.

The Haunted River Morgue

WHEN I was on a lecture and broadcasting tour in the United States I met an elderly Spanish gentleman in New York who told me the following traditional Spanish ghost story he had heard in his youth:¹

One night about the year 1830 three young men were seated before a fire in a house in the Calle de Ricoma Granellers in a sleepy town in Andalusia, eating roasted chestnuts and drinking old Oporto wine. They were medical students, belonging to the college of St. Fernando, and they were celebrating the near approach of the festival of Cordova and the public holiday which was to take place on the morrow with a little preliminary feasting, a few toasts and much idle, and, even scandalous, conversation.

It was whilst these young men were discussing the staff of St. Fernando, taking each member in turn, from the pompous Señor de Soto, senior surgeon, to the latest comer, the shy, petite Sister, Caterina, till not a shred of their characters remained, that a knock came at the door, and Hervada, the eldest of the trio, rising lazily and with an ill grace, suddenly exclaimed: 'Holy Mother! That must be Juan de Garez; I had clean forgotten we had asked him.'

A moment or so later a tall, lanky youth, with a very cadaverous countenance, strode into the room and joined the trio.

'It is the devil of a night out,' he began, 'fiendishly cold and damp, and so slippery that it is only with the greatest difficulty you can keep your feet. And the snow sweepers—their insolence is past comprehension. A petition ought to be got up to the Mayor to have them, one and all, clapped in prison. Only fancy, as I was crossing the square just now, two of them

¹ All names in this story are fictitious.

stopped me and demanded—demanded, if you please—a peso. I gave them a centesimo—a bad one I had given me in a tram-car last night—and you should have heard them swear.’

‘And they didn’t frighten you,’ Luzan, another of the trio, said slyly.

‘Frighten me!’ de Garez retorted haughtily, drawing himself up to his full height, and pointing to the muzzle of a pistol that gleamed wickedly from the inner pocket of his overcoat. ‘When I have this with me, I am afraid of no one.’

‘Or nothing,’ Luzan chimed in pertly.

‘What do you mean by that, Luzan?’ de Garez said, taking off his overcoat and hanging it on the door peg. ‘If I am afraid of no one, I am certainly afraid of nothing. What subtlety underlies the meaning of your words?’

Luzan helped himself to another glass of port and then, looking unusually solemn for him, replied: ‘Only this, Juan, there are at times other things to fear besides human beings. I know, for example, of a soldier, a contemporary of my father’s, who displayed the greatest courage in war and was yet afraid to pass through a village graveyard alone after nightfall.’

‘He was mad then,’ de Garez said; ‘excessive shell-shock had proved too much for him. What in the name of heaven is there to fear in a graveyard? Not the dead?’

‘Yes, the dead and the atmosphere around them. Have you never experienced any feeling of fear in the presence of a corpse—not actual fear of the corpse itself—but of an indefinite, inexplicable something that seems to hang around and be associated with it. Don’t you believe in ghosts?’

‘Ghosts!’ de Garez retorted scornfully, helping himself to a handful of chestnuts. ‘Not I. There are no such things. For goodness’ sake talk sense. I am in no mood to be trifled with, the weather gets on my nerves.’

Luzan laughed. ‘Say rather,’ he remarked with a shiver, ‘the night is far too cold for the least mention of such a harrowing subject as ghosts. Juan, will you accept a wager?’

Hervada and Suarez, the third member of the trio, exchanged amused glances; they anticipated fun.

De Garez leaned forward, put a piece of twisted paper in the fire and lit a cigar. 'It depends. What is it?' he asked.

'You know the morgue on the south bank of the river?' Luzan said. De Garez nodded.

'The building that used to be the hospital and was abandoned because of the swarms of rats that ate the bodies in the river? I have never been inside it but I have passed by it often enough.'

'Have you heard that another reason for it being abandoned was that both it and the river were so badly haunted?'

De Garez shook his head. 'No, I never heard that, and if I had I should have laughed and have treated such a rumour with the contempt it deserved. Just as if any building, hospital or house would be abandoned for such a ridiculous reason!'

Luzan frowned. 'Whether you believe it or not the hospital was abandoned mainly on account of the hauntings. However, I don't wish to argue. As you apparently don't believe in ghosts, will you remain one night alone in the morgue?'

'What will you give me if I do?'

'A dozen bottles of the finest old port in Andalusia.'

'And if I fail?'

'You give me the same.'

'All right,' de Garez said. 'I'll do it, provided that the three of you promise you won't play any tricks and that I have a fire all night in the room I sit in. I don't relish staying all night in an old draughty building without a fire. How shall I get into the morgue?'

'Oh, I'll manage that,' Luzan said. 'I know the keeper of the morgue and if I tip him he'll lend me the key.'

'What hours do you propose?' de Garez asked.

'From eleven o'clock at night till five o'clock in the morning.'

At half-past ten the next night Luzan, Hervada and Suarez

were again sitting before a fire in the house in the Calle de Ricoma Granellers waiting for Juan de Garez.

'You've got some trick up your sleeve, Luzan,' Hervada observed. 'Why don't you take us into confidence, and let us know what it is?'

'Wait,' Luzan said, laughing. 'You will appreciate it all the better when you see it. The conceit of that fellow de Garez has long ruffled me. He wants taking down a peg or two. He will be tonight. Tomorrow you won't know him.'

At this Hervada looked a trifle anxious. Luzan and de Garez were both natives of the South of Spain, and possessed, in a very marked degree, the quick, uncertain temperament peculiar to that clime.

'You are thinking that Juan will probably shoot someone, or go mad with fright,' Luzan observed. 'I will see to it the former does not happen, and I feel thoroughly assured there is very little prospect of the latter. He is far too normal and evenly balanced to be scared by what may very possibly occur tonight. Here he is.'

As Luzan spoke a rap came at the door, and directly afterwards de Garez, wearing a heavy fur coat and carrying a basket laden with eatables and wine, strode into their midst.

'You see I am punctual,' he began; 'it still wants several minutes to eleven. Is everything ready?'

Luzan nodded. 'Yes,' he said, 'I have the keys of the building; and you will find a dog there to keep you company. It belongs to Corteza, who has no room for it at home, and begged me to let it stay there tonight. It is a mastiff, almost as big as a bear, and quite as savage, so you need have no fear of tricksters. Have a drink before you go?'

Juan nodded and, taking off his coat, threw it on the table. He then bent over the fire and warmed himself, while Luzan dived into the sideboard for a fresh bottle of port. He took some minutes finding it, but de Garez was too interested in a stamp album to notice what he was up to, and it was only Hervada who saw him steal surreptitiously up to Juan's overcoat and extract something glittering from one of the pockets. At eleven

o'clock precisely de Garez, having had a drink, got into his coat again and, giving his hands and feet a final warm, set out, accompanied by the three friends.

The weather had somewhat improved. Though still terribly cold, there was no longer that raw dampness in the air that there had been on the previous evening, and it was certainly much lighter. The swiftly moving clouds did now, from time to time, reveal the calm, majestic moon; and the latter's silvery beams, falling aslant the town, imparted to the vista of church spires and turreted housetops a singular sense of serenity and of almost unearthly beauty. Few people were about. Occasionally a woman, clutching her wraps tightly round her and struggling to steady herself on the slippery pavement, passed by on her way to midnight mass; and once, once only, the sombre figure of a watchman shot out from some obscure archway, and retired again after shining his lantern full in the faces of the quartette, and allowing them to pass on unchallenged.

A more vivid touch of life was now and again realized by the approach of a carriage, full of revellers, gaily clad, and bound either for a night club or some restaurant that catered especially for such parties; and also by the ruddy glow of light, loud voices and shrill laughter which proceeded occasionally from the houses, whose inmates obviously were determined to sit up till morning and thus make the most of the holiday.

At last, leaving the main thoroughfare, our quartette turned down a long, narrow passage between very high and dismal-looking houses, where all these indications of life ceased, and a stillness, only comparable with that of death, supervened. The students now adapted more wary tactics. They no longer clumped along on the soles of their feet but tip-toed as softly as possible, while they continued their conversation in whispers. At length Luzan, who led the way and kept constantly peering about him in case they were either watched or followed, drew up before an isolated building on the south bank of the river. It was the morgue. Both it and the river were given a wide berth after dusk as both were reputed to be very badly haunted.

Taking a key from his pocket and fitting it in the lock of the door. Luzan noiselessly turned it and bid the others follow. The moment they entered there was a whine, and an enormous form came bounding towards them out of the darkness. It was Lopez, the keeper's mastiff, and the great animal evinced every indication of delight, especially on seeing Luzan, to whom it seemed particularly attached.

'It has evidently had enough of being here by itself,' Hervada murmured, 'and no wonder. Heavens! What a musty smell, and how cold! I wouldn't be in your shoes, de Garez, for a thousand pesos.'

'Come now, don't discourage him,' Luzan said, frowning. 'Remember, he is to have a fire, and with Lopez here to keep him company he need have no fear whatever. You see, he doesn't believe in ghosts.'

'I don't,' de Garez sneered, and it was quite evident from his voice that he was as yet totally unimpressed and wholly unconcerned. Neither Hervada nor Suarez, however, as they glanced around, felt quite so easy. They stood close together in the gloomy, stone-flagged hall and looked around them at the wide, empty, sombre oak staircase opposite, and at the numerous open doorways, revealing nothing but the most funereal darkness; everything they saw seemed to present itself in an entirely new aspect. The white glow from Luzan's lamp, as he flashed it first here and then there, called into existence the most extraordinary and novel shadows, shadows everywhere, and shadows to which there seemed to be no material counterparts. Moreover, there was something strange in the stillness: something they had never experienced before; it seemed to be forced, assumed, a mere camouflage for an Unknown Element that might, however, reveal itself any minute. Hervada touched Luzan on the elbow and drew him slightly aside.

'I say,' he whispered, 'don't carry your joke with Juan too far. I'm scared already.'

Luzan said nothing; he merely smiled, and lantern in hand, proceeded along a dark, dank passage, the rest following,

with Lopez in the rear. As they went, the moonlight pouring through a window behind them flooded the whole passage with a white glow, which threw the shadows of the four men on the bare, whitewashed walls into the most pronounced and startling relief. Still the quartette went on till they finally reached a door near the end of the passage. Opening the door they entered a lofty, spacious room, once the operating theatre of the hospital and now the river morgue. Over the door was one of those rectangular glass windows, the kind of fanlight so often seen in dissecting-chambers, while the forepart of the roof, that nearest to the sole window of the apartment, one immense sheet of glass, consisted almost entirely of skylights. These now, however, were somewhat darkened by a thick covering of snow. Opposite the window, but far back in the room, were two long wooden tables on trestles. The light, penetrating with more difficulty to this part of the chamber, illuminated but a mere portion of it, sufficient, however, to show a number of cadavers, extended at full length on the tables and covered with sheets, so tightly drawn around them that the bodies beneath them were defined.

On entering the room Hervada, at a word from Luzan, at once set to work laying the fire, while de Garez unpacked his basket and arranged a couple of chairs in front of the grate so that he could sit in one and rest his feet comfortably in the other. Suarez busied himself trying to persuade Lopez to get over his dislike of the dead and settle alongside de Garez for the night; while Luzan made a complete tour of the room, looking into the cupboards and peeping under the tables to see, as he put it, 'that no one was in hiding'.

At length, apparently satisfied, he shone his lantern on the fanlight over the door and tilted it so as to let a little more air into the room. 'In case,' as he laughingly remarked to Juan, 'the ghosts prove too much for you and you feel a trifle faint in consequence.'

'It's you who will feel faint,' de Garez growled, 'if you play any monkey tricks. You swear on your oath you won't?' And Hervada and Suarez looked at one another with covert

concern in their glances, when Luzan once again smilingly perjured himself. The fire had by this time begun to crackle and splutter, and its forked flames cast a cheery glow over the hearth, counteracting to some extent the dismal effect of the moonbeams.

De Garez, helping himself to a glass of wine, placed a pistol across his knees, and pronounced himself quite ready to begin his vigil.

‘I hold you to your promise, however,’ he said, ‘that you will turn up here at five in the morning sharp, and that the case of port will be left at my lodgings during the course of the afternoon.’

‘You may rest easy about that,’ Luzan responded. ‘If we find you here at five and we are satisfied you have never quitted the premises, you shall have the wine. My word is my bond. Never fear.’

The trio then filed out of the room and, laughing softly to themselves, closed the door behind them and retraced their way along the passage.

‘What on earth is your game, Luzan?’ Hervada remarked as soon as they had gained the street. ‘I can’t in the least see how you intend to frighten him.’

‘Can’t you?’ Luzan replied. ‘Well, as I told you before, wait and see. You know Diego, don’t you?’

‘Diego!’ Hervada and Suarez burst out simultaneously. ‘You don’t mean to say he is in it?’

‘Oh, yes I do,’ Luzan responded. ‘Since I promised Juan not to play off any tricks on him myself, and knowing what tender consciences you two possess, I persuaded Diego, who is not exactly on the best of terms with Juan, to work off a little jest on him. He is now on one of the tables in the morgue, wrapped up in a sheet, waiting for the propitious moment to display his cards. That is why I kept Juan in the forepart of the room all the time. As we passed by the table just now on our way out, Diego whispered, “Remember, in one hour”, and I was frightened out of my life lest Juan should have heard him; but one glance was sufficient. Juan was half-sitting, half-lying

in his chair, swilling port and stuffing down sweetmeats like the gourmand he is. He suspects nothing. Bah, how I despise him, the swine !'

For the next three-quarters of an hour or so the trio kept wandering round the streets and squares, for the most part silent ; Hervada and Suarez fearfully perturbed in their minds as to how the night's plot would work out. They were forced to admit that de Garez was a thorough boaster, there was no getting away from that. All the hospital knew it and despised him accordingly, but at the same time he was practical and keen-witted and, like all Southern Spanish, terribly fiery and hot-headed when once aroused. It was not only a question of how would he act if horribly frightened, but what would he do, what might he not do if and when he realized he was the victim of a somewhat cruel, practical joke. They bore de Garez no ill-will ; in fact, they would have backed out of the whole affair had they not compromised and more than half pledged themselves ; and had it not been for Luzan. They feared Luzan—everyone in the hospital feared Luzan—his caustic tongue and biting sarcasm, and besides he was inveterate. Deep down in his heart, though hidden as a rule, he had, they knew, a very distinct antipathy to de Garez. Yet they had never till now suspected that he disliked him sufficiently to wish to do him any real injury.

'Look here, Luzan,' they said, as Luzan, pulling out his watch, told them it was about time they returned if they wanted to see any of the fun. 'Supposing Juan takes it into his head to try and jump out of the window into the river beneath it, or go stark, raving mad, how will we prevent him?'

'He won't do either,' was the reply, 'he's too big a coward to risk his life in that way, and he's not the right temperament for lunacy. People who are like slugs, watery and gelatinous, never go mad. But come, we must hasten.'

Once again walking on tiptoe, this time with even greater precaution than before, they quickly regained the house and, entering it softly, crept noiselessly to the door of the morgue.

The hearts of two of them at least pulsed terribly, for they momentarily expected to hear the most fearful commotion within the chamber, but all was still; not the barest suspicion of a sound, and the accumulation of strange, unaccountable shadows on the walls seemed greater even than before. Luzan raised a forefinger warningly and made signs to his companions to take off their boots. The three youths then stood on the boxes, cunningly placed there for the purpose, and peeped through the open fanlight into the room.

De Garez was reclining in his chair before the fire quite peacefully, and by his side on the mat was Lopez, apparently fast asleep.

'The dog's all right,' Luzan whispered. 'I gave him a drugged biscuit.'

The fire, which by this time had settled down into a dull, red glow, gave out very little light; but the moon, now at its height, shone brilliantly through the big solitary window, and imparted to the grizzly objects on the tables and the gas piping a singularly ghastly lustre.

At once the eyes of the three watchers became riveted on these objects; they expected every second to see one of them move. While they were thus anticipating, the distant sounds of the clock of St. Maria striking midnight fell with a startling distinctness on the pronounced hush, and the next moment a cold current of air, rustling through the passage, set doors and windows jarring. Lopez growled, and directly afterwards the watchers, glancing towards the table upon which Diego was lying, fancied they detected a slight movement. A thrill of the most intense excitement rushed through them. They instinctively felt some supreme crisis was now close at hand.

They glanced at de Garez—he was still leaning back peacefully in his chair. Obviously he had not noticed anything. Once more directing their attention to the table, they again fancied they could detect a movement, and as it was repeated, all doubts as to its reality vanished. One of the shrouded figures, though strangely enough neither Hervada

nor Suarez could exactly tell which, undoubtedly stirred; they saw it give a kind of convulsive wriggle and then quiver all over, after which there came from it a series of half gasps, half groans, that terminated in a gurgle of such intensity and realism that both watchers, although they told themselves that it was, that it could only be acting, felt their blood turn to ice. To their amazement, however, de Garex took no notice of the sounds but still maintained the same attitude of calm indifference and laziness.

The noises were not repeated, but on removing their eyes from de Garex and concentrating their attention once again on the table, they suddenly saw one of the figures slowly rise and with great stealthiness climb down on to the floor. It was so enormous that Hervada and Suarez were amazed; they could not imagine what cunning device Diego had got hold of to make himself appear so tall. For some seconds it remained absolutely motionless, bathed in moonlight, but on Lopez whining, it turned slowly round and glided forward in the direction of the animal. Lopez immediately started up, its hair bristling on end and its eyes full of terror. Making a sideways movement so as to get as far away as possible from the approaching figure, it made a sudden dart towards the door, and finding it closed, began to scratch the lower panel furiously.

‘Luzan,’ Hervada whispered, his teeth chattering, ‘this is beyond a joke. Stop it.’

But Luzan made no reply; he was staring with terrified eyes at the huge white figure that was now advancing towards the door with curiously long and noiseless strides.

‘Stop it!’ Hervada repeated. ‘Tell Diego to take off those clothes. Tell him, quick!’

‘Diego!’ Luzan cried. ‘That THING is not Diego! It’s . . .’ But he did not finish.

The figure had by this time reached the door, and as it stretched out its long arm towards the handle Luzan leaped from his perch and fled.

.

The yellow rays of the early morning sun were gilding the great solitary window of the morgue, and the snow on the eaves and skylights overhead had already begun a perpetual drip, drip, drip, when Hervada and Suarez—Luzan had inexplicably disappeared—following at the heels of the porter, once again visited the scene of their nocturnal adventure. Their hearts beat with fearful expectation as they threaded their way along the dank passage and halted at the door of the morgue chamber. Corteza, after knocking two or three times at the door and receiving no response, very cautiously turned the handle and peeped inside the chamber. But what was their astonishment when a voice, which they all recognized, called out lazily: 'Hulloa, you fellows, is that you? Why, I had no idea it was so late. I've slept like a top.'

They went in, and there was de Garez sitting bolt upright in his chair, stretching himself and yawning.

'You see,' he continued, 'I am here still. I've not run away. I believe that biscuit of yours, the one you intended for Lopez but which I ate, being hungry, when you weren't looking, was doped. I tasted morphine or some such muck in it. Anyhow, I've stuck it out, without seeing as much as half a ghost, and I'll thank you to let me have that case of port by two o'clock this afternoon. Why, Corteza, what in the name of heaven do you want here at this hour, and where is Luzan?'

But Corteza made no response. He had followed Hervada and Suarez to the tables, and all three were staring in horrified silence at two of the objects that lay there side by side. The one, which they identified as Diego, was partly uncovered. There was a faint purplish blue mark round its throat and terror in its wide-open lack-lustre eyes. The other, which must have measured at least six feet six inches, was also only partly enveloped in its white wrapping.

'Who—what is it?' Hervada whispered hoarsely, pointing to one of its long arms. 'See, the fingers are bent and they are almost touching Diego.'

'That,' Corteza stuttered, crossing himself hastily, 'that is Enrique Gertado, the robber and murderer of a dozen people.'

He was found drowned in the river just outside this crazy old building the day before yesterday.'

Postscript

Luzan was full of remorse for the trick he had played, and it was a long time before he had recovered from the shock of the terrible death of Diego. He gave de Garez the wine he had won, and de Garez was more boastful and full of himself than ever.

The phantom of Gertado increased the number of ghosts that already haunted the river, and the old hospital, in consequence of them and the rats, was finally demolished. On a spot further from the river a new morgue was built.

The Figurehead on the Mast

A PROPOS of unlucky ships, a Chicago paper of March 1885 contained a strange story. Two men at work one morning on the topmast-head of one of the lake schooners lost their hold quite inexplicably and, falling to the deck, were killed. This somewhat unusual accident made the rest of the crew believe that the vessel was unlucky and haunted, and as soon as she got to Buffalo they left her.

The captain tried to get men to unload the grain on board her, but the story of her having lost her luck and being haunted had spread, and the majority of the grain-trimmers whom he approached refused to set a foot on board her.

Then, when after no end of trouble he did succeed in unloading her, and she was ready to sail for Cleveland, a fresh difficulty arose. He had to get a crew to man her, and this proved almost impossible. 'What, sail in that ship!' was the reply of the men who were asked to join. 'No fear, she's far too unlucky.'

In the end, however, the captain did manage to get a number of men to promise to sign on for the voyage, but no sooner had they come on board the ship than one of them, turning to the mate, who was standing nearby, exclaimed, 'What have you got a figurehead on the mast for?'

The mate glanced upwards. 'Good heavens!' he exclaimed, turning deadly pale, 'it's old Bill!'

Bill was one of the men who had fallen from the mast and been killed. And this so scared the new crew that they one and all hurried off the ship.

The indefatigable captain still persevered, however, and eventually obtained another crew, and sailed. But he never got to Cleveland, for his ship was sunk in a collision with another vessel,

The Mystery of the Blonde Women

IN the *Story Teller* magazine for 1843 there is a story of the mysterious disappearances of young men in Paris during the time Regnie was the Lieutenant-General of Police. The mystery was solved by the son of the famous detective Le Coq, who discovered that the young men were murdered by a gang of miscreants, the leader of whom was Jaborouski, a lovely Polish woman.

The victims of these wretches were all decapitated. Their bodies were sold to doctors and medical students; and their heads, after a process of embalming, to professors of phrenology, that pseudo science being extremely popular at that time.

All the gang were arrested and executed, except Jaborouski, who escaped, and vowed vengeance on Le Coq's son.

The story of the Blonde Women relates to a further series of baffling mysteries which took place in Paris while M. Regnie was still Head of the French police.

One afternoon Paul Bernier was sitting in his parlour enjoying a little rest, when an official from the Préfecture of Police informed him that his uncle, M. Regnie, wished to see him at once. M. Regnie, though fond of Paul, showed him no favours, and treated him the same as he treated other detectives.

Bernier did not look too pleased. He had just returned to the Préfecture after giving evidence at a trial at the Criminal Courts, and he had been hoping there would be nothing more for him to do that day. And now Regnie had sent for him. That meant censure or another case, and if the latter, he betted a thousand to one against it being of outstanding interest. What he wanted was a first-class mystery case, something that would mean big headlines in all the papers and bring him into the limelight, and, of course, promotion. But luck like that was slow in coming. It had not come yet; perhaps it would never come.

'All right, André,' he said wearily, 'I'll not keep the Chief waiting but, plague take him, I'd give a lot for a comfortable snooze.'

Regnie looked up from the table at which he had been writing at Bernier's entrance, and Paul sensed trouble.

'I've sent for you, Paul,' he exclaimed, 'because I have something very important to tell you, but before I do so, understand you are not to breathe a word of it outside this room, not to one man, not to your best friend, not to your wife, if you are unlucky enough to have one, not to a soul. Is that clear?'

'Perfectly clear, Chief.'

'Good! Now listen. For months past I have been pestered to death by people with missing young relatives. Hardly a week passes but someone in the provinces writes to the Préfecture saying they feel sure something dreadful has happened to their wife or daughter, or some other woman relative or friend, who came to Paris, either for a holiday or to seek employment, and have not answered letters written to them.

'I have endeavoured to find their offsprings and I've not been able to. They have disappeared without leaving the slightest clue as to what has happened to them. They have gone out of their hotels or apartments and have taken nothing with them but the actual clothes they have been wearing, and they have never returned. Their parents blame me: they say the police are stupid, idle and God knows what, and the worst of it is the Government are beginning to think the same. I am at my wit's end. Unless these mysterious disappearances can be put a stop to, I shall cease to be Chief of the Préfecture. Cease, do you hear?'

To emphasize his feelings Regnie banged with his clenched fist on the table in such a fashion that the pen with which he had been writing fell on the floor. It was the first time Paul Bernier had ever seen him give such vent to his feelings. Normally he was unruffled, calmness itself, but underlying that calmness there was potential dynamite.

'Have the people who have vanished anything in common?' Bernier asked.

'Yes,' Regnie responded. 'Several things. They are all young, none over thirty. They are robust in health, no indications of any disease. All the women have yellow hair. I don't think the colour of their hair is of special significance. What strikes me most is that they have all been strangers in this city, none of them residents. The possibility of some phony cult being responsible for the disappearances must not be ruled out. You will wonder why I sent for you who have had so little experience compared with some of the detectives. It is not because you are my nephew. It is because you are physically better suited for the task than any of the others.'

Bernier was thrilled. His uncle wanted him, him, Paul Bernier, the youngest detective on the staff, to tackle these great mysteries. It was with an effort he remembered a seemingly imperturbable countenance. 'I will do my best, Chief,' he said quietly.

'You had better, Paul,' Regnie observed. 'Your future in this place depends on whether you succeed or not. Find out the secret of these disappearances, and promotion is sure. Fail, and although you are my nephew, you are no longer one of us. Do you understand?'

'Yes, Chief,' Bernier replied.

'Good! Listen to all I am about to say. Owing to your rather effeminate face' (Paul winced) 'and slight build, you can impersonate women fairly well. I saw you in that amateur show at the Grasshopper Club last winter, and you quite deceived me for a few minutes; I am not easily misled, but I really thought you were a girl.'

'You are to play the role of a country girl, the daughter of a small farmer or innkeeper, visiting Paris for the first time. You must not only look the part, but act and speak like it to perfection. One mistake may cost you your life. I have an idea that Jaborouski may be at her old pranks again, and you know what she is like. Twice as cruel as a tigress and ten times as cunning as a fox. Be sure to have lovely long golden hair. The Préfecture will pay for a wig, clothes, everything. Remember that. I suggest you haunt the boulevards, parks and other popular

places. Directly you get on the track of anything, let me know. Absolute secrecy is essential: not a word to anyone but me. Do you understand?"

'I do,' Bernier asid.

Regnie's lips slightly relaxed. It was the nearest attempt to a smile he could manage. Waving his hand in the direction of the door, he took up his pen and went on with his writing.

Quitting the room noiselessly Bernier hastened to his lodgings to get ready for the task in front of him. At eight o'clock that evening, with face slightly tanned as if he had newly arrived from the sea or countryside, clad in an obviously country-made dress, looking like a rural beauty, with grey eyes and long yellow hair, he strolled leisurely down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées and into the Bois de Boulogne.

Mindful of his instructions he stopped every now and then to ask someone the way to a theatre or some other place of amusement, taking good care to speak with a strong provincial accent, in tones loud enough to be heard by passers-by. Several people eyed him in a manner that roused his suspicions and made him hopeful, but nothing came of it. And so it was for several days. Blank after blank he drew, and with each blank M. Regnie grew more and more impatient.

'I'll give you one more chance,' he said to Bernier, 'and if you can't light on somebody in the way of a clue within the next twenty-four hours, you can look for another vocation. The Préfecture needs brains not dolts. Three more young women have been reported missing here, in Paris, since the case was allotted to you, spirited away under your very nose. Imbecile! Go!'

Bernier went, feeling very hopeless. Twenty-four hours in which to accomplish what appeared to be the impossible. Mechanically he betook himself once again to the Bois de Boulogne and, after parading up and down for some minutes, sat on a seat, deliberating what to do. He knew enough of M. Regnie to know he would keep his word. What he said he would do, he always did, come what might. Nothing would make him waver. Rumour had it he was just as inflexible in his

own home with his wife and children. Better suicide, Bernier argued to himself, than expulsion from the Force he loved so much. The Préfecture! Why, it had been his ambition to become one of its leading detectives, like young Le Coq, when he was quite a small boy.

And now, unless the unexpected happened, he would be out of it in less than twenty-four hours. The passers-by all looked hopelessly respectable and commonplace. Nursemaids with their charges, tourists, sightseers from the provinces, bourgeois, a mechanic or two hurrying along to their jobs, none as much as bestowing a passing glance in his direction.

He was getting up with the desperate idea of seeking his tomb in the river, when an elderly woman and a young girl planted themselves on his seat, as far away from him as possible. Both were well dressed without being conspicuously so. There was no resemblance between the two. The elderly woman had a long, narrow face, black hair turning grey, a sallow complexion, Roman nose and small deep-set glittering eyes. She might have been southern French or Spanish.

The young woman, a blonde, with blue eyes and neat features, was decidedly pretty, and Bernier was at once attracted by her. He wondered what the relationship was between them; not mother and daughter, for they did not resemble one another in the slightest. They might have been more distantly related or just friends, but that seemed a trifle odd considering the obvious disparity in their ages. They spoke in French, the younger of the two with a foreign accent and not quite as fluently as the older woman. During pauses in their conversation Bernier caught the young woman looking round at him, and once when their eyes met she turned away with the suggestion of a smile. Emboldened at this and thinking he might as well derive a little pleasure from talking to a very prepossessing woman before putting an end to himself, he remarked on the fineness of the evening.

The older woman responded more pleasantly than he might have expected from her rather forbidding expression,

and the ice thus broken a conversation, in which all three joined, followed.

The more Bernier gazed at the younger woman the more fascinated he became. Never had he seen such beauty. From the weather, the sights of Paris were next discussed, Bernier, despite his increasing susceptibility to the charms of the younger woman, never quite forgetting the task that had been allotted to him, or letting his watchfulness become altogether dormant. So far, however, he felt fairly well convinced that there was nothing about these women to justify any suspicion. Their coming to his seat, the friendly glance the pretty one had bestowed on him, and the ease with which he had got into conversation with them struck him as just a trifle curious, but probably, he told himself, it would not have done had he not been a detective, trained to be suspicious.

Mindful of his role and just to test them he told them he was on a visit to Paris and was very lonely as he knew no one in the city. He stressed this and fancied he saw them interchange swift, meaning glances.

'Then you live in the provinces,' the older woman said. 'In a town or quite in the country?'

Bernier smiled. 'I'm very much of a rustic,' he replied. 'I come from a little village in Normandy.'

'In Normandy!' the younger woman exclaimed, her blue eyes beaming. 'That's where I've always wanted to go, it sounds so romantic. Do tell us about your home. Have you parents, and are you married?'

Bernier shook his head sadly. 'I have no parents,' he said. 'They died when I was sixteen. And I'm not married.'

'Then you live alone,' the elder of the women remarked.

Bernier nodded. 'Alas, yes.'

'And your vocation?'

'I am barmaid at an inn.'

Again he fancied glances full of covert meaning flashed between the two.

'Then you are in Paris just for a holiday?' the younger woman observed.

'Precisely. And directly I have finished sightseeing I shall return. Now tell me about yourselves.'

'If you wish,' the elder lady said. 'The young lady you see here is Mlle Monistroli. Her father, Count Monistroli, died a few years ago and her mother, the Countess, who lives in Poland, engaged me as her companion, to look after her while she is studying singing.'

'You intend singing professionally?' Bernier ejaculated, addressing Mlle Monistroli.

He was naturally impressionable and found it difficult at times to conceal his likes and prejudices. There was a type of plainness that grated on him. The duenna was that type and consequently he feared looking at or talking to her for fear she should interpret his aversion to her in his face and voice. He thought it safer to fix his attention on her young and charming companion, and justified himself on the grounds that if she read the admiration he felt for her in his eyes, she would merely take him for a very simple girl, and should she be a crook, betray herself in some manner or other.

In answer to his query she nodded. 'Yes,' she said, 'I hope one day to be in Grand Opera.'

'She has a wonderful voice,' the duenna exclaimed.

'I've no doubt she has,' Bernier said, not looking at the duenna. He offered each of them cigarettes, and while she smoked Mlle Monistroli got more and more communicative. She told him about her early childhood, her schooldays, and parents, her hobbies and recreations. She spoke with such naïvety and had such an amused expression when he winced perceptibly—he simply could not help it—at her allusion to her male friends, that he couldn't believe she was anything but just a nice, wholesome girl. He wished they had been there alone, just their two selves. His dislike to the duenna momentarily increased. He much pitied Mlle Monistroli having such an ill-favoured companion.

After she had talked about herself she persuaded Bernier to tell them more about himself, how he amused himself at home and all he intended doing during the time he was in Paris.

They talked on in this fashion till it grew dusk and the duenna declared they must be going home.

'Won't you dine with us tomorrow?' Mlle Monistroli said, as they were about to separate.

'I shall be delighted,' Bernier replied. 'I've enjoyed meeting you very much indeed.'

Mlle Monistroli smiled. 'And we, you. You see, we know so few people in Paris.'

They were standing in full glare of a lamp-post and in the strong light the jewellery on the girl's wrists and fingers shone and sparkled. It was expensive jewellery.

A feeling of relief passed through Bernier when he saw she was not wearing a marriage ring. Her hands were in keeping with her lithe, slender body, the fingers white and tapering, with almond-shaped nails that shone like polished agates.

Something of the primitive glamour of the night and stars clung to the woman, and as she gazed half timidly, half coyly up at him from under her long-lashed blue eyes he was thrilled to the soul, and his heart rose in rebellion to his reason. Never had he seen so fair a woman nor one who exercised such an overpowering attraction for him. It didn't seem possible that such a lovely woman could be less pure than the fragrant evening air and the cloudless, star-spangled sky. He forgot that some of the most famous women in history and in the annals of crime have been very lovely and innocent-looking.

He could not refrain from turning round to watch their receding forms as, hurrying off in a different direction from the one he was taking, they gradually faded from sight amid the deepening gloom and fast accumulating shadows.

He had not been long enough a detective to lose the untrammelled impulses of a very susceptible and impressionable youth and become mind-locked in his vocation. It was with dread anticipation he entered the Chief's room to report his failure.

'Well,' M. Regnie snapped, 'you have come to tell me you have discovered something?'

Bernier shook his head miserably. 'No, Chief,' he said. 'I've had no luck.'

M. Regnie frowned. 'I thought as much,' he growled. 'Has nothing happened and no suspicious incident?'

Bernier gulped. He felt he was in a quandary. Duty bade him keep nothing from M. Regnie; chivalry and adoration, on the other hand, forbade him alluding to Mlle Monistroli. Which should it be? Duty won, but it cost him a great effort and made him feel very mean.

M. Regnie listened to all he had to say with the greatest interest, and from time to time made notes.

'Did you notice if they looked at you at all significantly before they sat on your seat?' he queried.

'I thought they did,' Bernier said, 'but it may only have been my fancy.'

'Detectives never fancy,' Regnie snapped. 'They either know or don't know. Did you note carefully the expressions on their faces when you spoke about yourself?'

'Yes, Chief, I did,' Bernier replied. 'Mlle Monistroli appeared interested.'

'And the other one?'

Bernier had had only eyes for Mlle Monistroli, but not deeming it politic to say so, he said, 'She appeared interested too.'

'They tried to pump things out of you?'

'In a measure, yes.'

'They may belong to the gang we're after,' Regnie mused. 'Anyway, it's worth trying. Look here. Go to their flat the day after tomorrow. I'll have you followed and find a means of being near at hand should you be in grave danger. Go well armed, be very careful they don't dope your drink or food, and don't let any siren wiles lull you into a state of false security. Watch every look and movement.'

Bernier was wrong about one thing he told the Chief of Police. The address Mlle Monistroli gave him was not that of a flat but of a house, within a few yards of the Seine. Though he fancied he knew most parts of Paris, he had some difficulty in

finding it. It was small and the only detached one in the street. A trim-looking maid, with sharp, black eyes and the suspicion of a moustache, let him in and escorted him up a flight of soft-carpeted stairs to a room on the first floor. The furniture was a strange amalgamation of articles of luxury and common things, showing a queer taste on the part of the owner. An antique chair, and near it a trumpery one from some cheap-jack store—old china, tawdry knick-knacks, rare tapestry, shoddy cushions. Opposites in style, glaring differences in periods, the aristocratic side by side with the vulgar new rich and crude plebeian.

Bernier's eyes were roving round, noting first one thing and then another when he heard light footsteps, and the door opened to admit Mlle Monistroli, looking ravishingly lovely in an indoor gown of black satin; her blonde hair most becomingly coiffured. She wore too much jewellery, he thought, to be quite in good taste and was, perhaps, a little too made-up, but that did not detract from the beauty of her features. He was particularly struck with her eyebrows, which had a peculiarly fascinating natural slant, almost meeting over her nose. This was most uncommon. He had seen no such eyebrows in living people except in pictures.

'Please sit down,' Mlle Monistroli said, 'and make yourself at home. You'll have a cocktail, won't you?'

Bernier watched her slim white fingers while she mixed him one.

'You'll have one, too,' he said. 'I make a point of never drinking alone. It's a religion with me.'

She smilingly assented, and they drank together.

'Isabel isn't very well,' she explained, 'and asks me to say she's very sorry she won't be able to dine with us. She's lying down.'

Bernier tried not to look too pleased. He instinctively disliked Isabel; but was it some kind of a ruse? He must not let his admiration for Mlle Monistroli altogether stifle his vocation.

They dined, Bernier and Mlle Monistroli, in a room at the

rear of the premises. Bernier was not accustomed to very chic diet. He felt obliged out of politeness to Mlle Monistroli to partake a little of the various savoury courses handed to him by a gigantic coloured manservant, but he would much have preferred a cut from a plain joint and a boiled jam roll.

Mindful of Regnie's warnings, he did not take wine or spirits. He would have given much for a cognac, or some of the choice vintage she was drinking.

After dinner they returned to the drawing-room and she bade him be seated next to her on the sofa. It was too early to have a lamp, so that they sat in the gloaming. Every now and then he closed his eyes to shut out her loveliness but he could not exclude the perfume of her nearness. It intoxicated him. Neither could he shut out her voice that was in such harmony with the rest of her. Twilight does queer things to anyone who is at all imaginative and impressionable. It cast a glamour over Mlle Monistroli, converting her in his eyes into an Undine or Lorelei. Her skin was of the pearliest, her hair the palest possible gold, her eyes, well, he could not discover if they were violet or blue. Her mouth was very scarlet, soft and wondrously moulded. She did not seem to belong to this world but to fairy and dreamland. He told her so and she laughed and said: 'Don't be such a goose and speak in such exaggerated terms. What is your game? I knew you were a man at once. You impersonate one of my sex tolerably well and might fool a man, but not many women. Are you a *mouchard*¹ or a thief? But no matter which, I like you.'

Her laughter was like rain on the leaves in summer. It was so soft and caressing, and in her eyes he read, or thought he read, a liking for him and promise of more, much more, in the future.

Then suddenly her red lips were close to his and he found himself kissing them passionately. She did not shrink away but, clinging to him, pulled his head down and kissed him back. Pausing for breath, she tilted back her head lightly, her long lashes shadowing her ivory cheeks, her lips laughing so pro-

¹ A type of detective, greatly hated in Paris at the time of this story.

vocatively that he kissed her again and again and ever more and more feverishly.

'You're awfully nice,' she whispered. 'I must see you again and again.' She put his arms around her. She held his face between her cool, soft palms. 'Let us be happy while we can,' she said. 'You, Sir Galahad, my new knight, and I.'

'Your new knight!' he exclaimed, a pang of jealousy shooting through him. 'Have you known many men?'

'Just a few,' she laughed. 'Why not? Am I so plain that it surprises you? I have had several men friends.'

'Plain!' he ejaculated. 'My God, if you are plain, why then, the most beautiful woman I've ever seen must be downright ugly. What a delightful scent. What is it?'

'A speciality of Georgette. The Maison Georgette in the Rue de Clichy. Being a man, you probably wouldn't know it.' Georgette's toilet requisites were about the best in Paris, and very expensive. 'Give me your handkerchief and I'll put some on it.'

Facing him was a large mirror in a gilt frame. Gazing at it he watched her go to a little table in one corner of the room and take a glittering silver-topped bottle from a red leather handbag. As she did so there was a marked change in her face. Gone was the softness in her eyes, to be replaced by a gleam of triumph. A sudden tightening of her lips eliminated their fullness and converted them into a thin scarlet line, and sharpened every angle of her cameo features. Nature abruptly revealed its hitherto artfully concealed danger signals in a manner so startling that Bernier was immeasurably shocked. It was with difficulty he composed himself.

Seating herself close to him she gently drew his head on to her lap and held the handkerchief she had scented to his nostrils. 'It's nice, isn't it, darling?' she purred. 'I'll put some more on before you go.'

Then she laughed, and he knew why.

The scent he sniffed was not the scent she called Georgette's. There was a familiar sweetness and sickliness about it. It was overpowering. Fortunately for him, however,

she had evidently miscalculated the amount necessary for her purpose and he managed to inhale just enough untainted air to prevent himself going right off. The pressure of her fingers on his nostrils and mouth made his efforts not to succumb very difficult. Luckily, relief came in the nick of time.

Convinced at last that the scent had done its work she removed her hand but not the handkerchief, and letting his head fall back on a plush cushion, she got up. Waiting till he heard her high heels tap across the richly druggeted floor, he wriggled his face free enough of the handkerchief to see her, greatly to his astonishment, slip into a large ebony grandfather clock, set flush against the room wall facing him, and vanish from sight. The door of it clicked gently behind her.

He waited a few minutes and then, springing up, he ran to the window. He wasn't surprised to find it was fastened down so that he couldn't open it. Opposite the house, leaning against a doorway, was a beggar. Recognizing him as one of the Préfecture's detectives, Bernier tapped on the window panes, but could not attract the fellow's attention. He seemed to be asleep. Giving it up as a bad job, Bernier now examined the big clock, which roused his curiosity. He opened the door of it and found it was merely a dummy. There was no pendulum but a door in the back which opened when he turned a knob. The sight he saw paralysed him with horror. Tied to a pillar in the centre of the room before him was a naked woman, probably about his own age. She had no hair, was horribly mutilated, and appeared to have been dead for some time.

Bernier's hand instinctively went to his hip pocket. His pistol was there but the cartridge had been extracted. When and how he could not imagine.

He was about to return to the drawing-room when the door of the torture room opened and Mlle Monistrolì entered. She saw him and screamed. He tried to return to the drawing-room but, to his dismay, he couldn't open the clock door. It had closed with a spring and shut him effectively in. In response to the woman's cries several villainous-looking men came rushing into the room. Mlle Monistrolì laughed mockingly.

Seeing it was useless to resist Bernier stepped out of the clock and before the ruffians, egged on by Mlle Monistroli, could prevent him, hurled his pistol with all his might at the window. There was the sound of crashing glass and a faint clack as the weapon struck the pavement.

'Curse you!' Mlle Monistroli cried, striking him on the mouth with her jewelled hand. 'You're smarter than I thought but it will avail you nothing. There are few people about in the street at this hour.' Turning to the ruffians she pointed to the dead woman and said, 'Take that body down and tie this fool to the pillar.'

And then, turning again to Bernier, she went on: 'It's bad luck for you, you poor simpleton, that the dope on the handkerchief didn't take effect. Had it done so you would have died comfortably, without pain. Our Isabel will have a little fun with you for a time and then cut your throat.'

Despite his struggles, they were binding Bernier to the pillar when the door opened, and the duenna Isabel entered, a glittering knife in one hand. The deepening twilight seemed to accentuate all her physiognomical defects. Bernier had thought her unprepossessing enough when he saw her in the Bois de Boulogne, but she now looked positively hideous. Leering diabolically she ambled like some malformed animal towards him and raised the knife.

Bernier nerved himself to bear the impact of the cruel blade. He clenched his teeth tight to prevent himself crying out, and stared as calmly as he could at the gloating hag. The crucial moment came. The knife poised on a level with his head came gradually closer to him. Mlle Monistroli's eyes gleamed with cruelty as she looked on in gleeful anticipation. The ruffians grinned.

Then, just as the knife seemed about to cut into Bernier's flesh, the utterly unexpected happened. The duenna suddenly slashed, not at Bernier but at the cord that bound him, setting him free, and before the astounded ruffians could recover from their astonishment she was covering them with a pistol.

'Sound this,' she said, thrusting a whistle into Bernier's hand. 'Blow it like hell.'

Bernier almost sank through the floor with astonishment. It was the voice of Regnie that spoke. The Chief of the Préfecture, renowned for his cleverness in disguising himself, was there in person.

Bernier blew the whistle and in a few seconds the room filled with police.

'It was quite simple,' Regnie explained to his nephew later at the Préfecture. 'All I really wanted to know when I gave you the case was where the woman who called herself Monistroli lived. She is Jaborouski.'

Bernier stared at him in amazement. 'Not really!'

Regne nodded. 'Yes, really. The moment I saw her one day, shopping with that old hag Isabel, I guessed her real identity. I observed Isabel very closely, and thought it might prove a good idea to impersonate her should a reason and opportunity occur. No one in Paris can equal me in making up and impersonations, except the Le Coqs, father and son. Luck favoured me. A reason and opportunity arose, and I was fully prepared. When I was made up and dressed few, if any, people could have told that I was not Isabel. My reputation and your life were at stake: I resolved to save both.

'I got into the Monistroli warren before you arrived for dinner. Jaborouski blundered in excluding Isabel from the dinner. That made it easy for me. I seized Isabel and the maid, and gagged and bound both of them. Two of my men overpowered the negro servant and served him in the same way. When Jaborouski sent for Isabel, it was I who entered and not Isabel. Jaborouski was far too occupied with you to do more than just glance at me. The rest you know.'

'What was the motive for the crimes?' Bernier asked.

'Hair,' Regnie said.

'Hair!'

Regnie nodded. 'Yes, hair. There were drawers full of yellow hair in the house. Blonde hair is in great request, not only in Paris but elsewhere. It fetches a big price. Jaborouski

must have made a lot of money out of the hair of her victims.'

'And their bodies? Did she sell them to doctors and medical students?'

Regnie shook his head. 'Oh, dear me, no. She was not quite such a fool as to do that twice. She had them put in sacks, weighted with stones, and dropped at night into the Seine, close to her house. That was silly, but even clever criminals are apt to make mistakes. The section of the Seine from which several of the bodies of Jaborouski's victims have been recovered has been rumoured for some time to be very badly haunted. Spectral forms have been seen hovering over the river and on its banks. I know that, like me, you are interested in the supernatural and do not scoff at all such rumours.

'You have earned promotion, Paul. Henceforth you will rank as one of the leading detectives at the Préfecture. Without your assistance the capture of the fiendish Jaborouski might not have been so easy. Now that she is under lock and key and on the road to the guillotine, she can't trouble us again.'

But she did.

The Hand on the Door

AT noon on July 5, 1829, M. Pierre Hersant, editor of a Marseilles financial journal, was sitting in the porch of an old inn in the village of Mauray, eating some rye bread and drinking some red wine. He was on a walking tour, and the hot sun had made him thirsty.¹

He drank so much wine that his eyes grew tired and in the end he dropped off to sleep. He awoke with a start to hear a voice, apparently close to his ear, say very emphatically three times in succession: 'The green signboard! The green signboard! The green signboard!'

He looked round but there was no one there, and when he got up and spoke about it to old Mère Fifi, who was managing the establishment in the temporary absence of her son, Jean, she declared that there was no one on the premises but their two selves and that he must have been dreaming.

He was too disturbed now, however, to settle down again, and paying Mère Fifi the three francs she had the effrontery to ask for his very meagre repast, he resumed his journey.

When he had left the village about a mile behind he came to cross roads, and being undecided which to take, he determined to toss for it. Accordingly, taking a coin from his pocket, he decided that heads should stand for the turning to his right, and tails for the turning to his immediate left.

He threw, and the coin fell head uppermost. Resolved to abide by the most out of three, he tossed again and once more it came down heads. Just out of curiosity he threw it once more, with the same result.

'Well,' he said, with a laugh, 'that settles it.'

Consequently, taking the road to the right he walked on,

¹ All names of people and places in this story, which has a factual foundation, are fictitious.

and presently found himself in a hollow, rendered pleasantly shady by a number of pines and beeches on either side. When he had got about halfway through it, he came to a very dilapidated house that looked as if it had not been occupied for a long time. It stood about a dozen yards from the road, and facing it on the far side of the road was a large pond.

Something made him stop and look at the pond, and he saw lying half in and half out of the water a much faded green sign-board with 'The White Hind Inn' on it. The letters were worn but still legible.

He looked at the house and saw the door of it open a few inches and a hand appear. It was too small, he thought, for an adult, ill-formed and very dirty. On the back of it was a very vivid and venomous-looking long red scratch. The sunlight focussed on it. He had a feeling that the owner of the hand was furtively watching him. The hand was quickly withdrawn and the door noiselessly closed.

There was something unpleasantly arrestive about the hand, something nasty and repellant. He felt it could not belong to anyone nice, and wondered what the person was doing in the empty house and how he or she got the scratch. He deliberated entering the house to find out who was there, but the house and, more particularly, the pond, gave him such a sudden eerie feeling that he hastened onwards.

Within a few minutes he arrived at the village of Theury, and looked at the village clock: it was half past one.

.

That same day at about seven o'clock in the evening Victor Modart, *gendarme*, was sitting smoking his pipe in the doorway of his thatched cottage. He had just been reading of a very sensational robbery in Macon, and he was comparing his lot in quiet, uneventful Mauray with that of his more fortunate fellow officers in the big cities.

'It is small wonder Gascon Brinvilliers and others of my old comrades gain promotion,' he said to himself. 'They will be

prefects soon, no doubt, while I am still only a humble *gendarme*. *Mille tonnières!* Nothing ever happens in this village.'

He had, however, barely given vent to this sentiment when a man and a woman, whom he recognized at once as Monsieur and Madame Legrand, came running up to him, crying out in tones of the greatest agitation:

'M. Modart, our little girl Isabelle! Oh, it is terrible! We sent her out on an errand at half past twelve this morning to Theury and she has not yet returned. Thinking she might have called at her aunty's on the way home, we did not worry, but when her aunty came to see us about an hour ago and said she hadn't seen Isabelle, we were then alarmed and made enquiries of our neighbours. But no one seems to have seen Isabelle, neither can they tell us anything about her. She has simply vanished, and we have come to ask you to find her for us.'

While they were speaking a thrill ran through Victor Modart. He saw possibilities of something out of the ordinary really happening at last. A child missing—she was only about six, and very probably had got lost in the fields or woods and would be brought home by someone before morning, but still, for the present she was missing. The parents had come to consult him, and he had for the first time in his professional career come into his own.

'I will commence searching for her at once, monsieur,' he said pompously.

He put on his cape and, after looking in the glass to see whether his belt was properly adjusted and his sword in exactly the right place, he announced himself ready to begin.

For over three hours he and the Legrands scoured the fields and woods, asking everyone they met whether they could tell them anything about Isabelle: but the result was always the same, an emphatic shake of the head and a very pronounced 'No.' At last it grew almost too dark to see, and the Legrands were so tired that they were forced to give in.

'Oh, go on,' they said to Victor Modart. 'Go on. For pity's sake don't give up; go on till you have found her. She must be somewhere.'

Victor Modart, however, did not need any prompting. He realized only too well his professional reputation was at stake, and that all chance of future promotion might very easily be dashed on the head if he did not succeed in finding the child. Still, where was he to look? And then an inspiration seized him. He would try old Farmer Gilgaut's bloodhound.

Farmer Gilgaut had recently been to England to visit his daughter there, and on his return had brought with him a monstrous bloodhound, which he told everyone would do the work of three detectives. Accordingly, going to Farmer Gilgaut, Modart asked him for the loan of the hound. Farmer Gilgaut consented, on condition that he accompanied the dog, and the two men, with the huge animal, set off together.

The dog was taken to the spot where Isabelle was last seen, given some of her clothes to scent, and then turned loose. After running about aimlessly for some time the hound finally set off in a definite direction, and with its nostrils close to the ground headed along the high road towards Theury.

On and on it went in this fashion, the two men, lanterns in hand, keeping pace with it as best they could. At last, when it reached the middle of what was known as Nightingale Hollow, it halted at a pond, pawed the ground angrily, snorted, and then, sniffing the ground, ran to the empty house facing the pond.

'Good Heaven!' Victor Modart exclaimed. 'The old White Hind! Who would have thought it?'

'Aye,' Père Gilgaut responded grimly. 'But what can be the meaning of it? Let us see.'

He gripped his cudgel tightly in his hand as he spoke, while Victor Modart drew his sword, and the two of them cautiously entered the house.

It was a two-storeyed edifice, and had long stood empty, some said on account of its extremely lonely and isolated position, and others on account of the pond which had for many years been reputed to be haunted.

There was blood everywhere, on the floor, on the walls, on the stairs leading to the first landing and in one of the bed-

rooms, but although they searched everywhere they could not find a body. When they came out of the house they found the hound at the pond, and it looked at them and whined.

'The dog would not behave like that unless there is something in the pond,' Gilgaut observed.

'That is so,' Modart said. 'I will have the pond dragged.'

He did, and at the bottom of it, weighted with stones, was the mutilated body of little Isabelle Legrand. She had been horribly murdered.

The Commissioner of the police in Macon took charge of the case and some of the cleverest detectives in Paris aided him, but no one was suspected, till at last a boy called Théophile Joseph Blot, aged fourteen, came forward and declared that on the day of the crime, at about twelve o'clock, he had seen a ragged, unkempt-looking man stop Isabelle Legrand and speak to her.

About a hundred yards or so from the commencement of Nightingale Hollow, someone else then said that they had quite recently seen such a man as Blot described lying under a hedge in a field near Mauray Church.

Regarding this as a clue, the police at once scoured the country, with the result that a tramp named Jacques Trobas, whom Blot immediately identified as the man he had seen talking to Isabelle, was arrested and charged with the murder.

On the day of the tragedy Isabelle had been given thirty-four sous by her parents to buy bread with, and that same evening Trobas was proved to have spent ten sous, which he could not satisfactorily account for, at an inn in the neighbourhood.

Beyond this, however, there was practically no evidence against him, yet so strong was the unfavourable impression his appearance created, that he would undoubtedly have been found guilty had it not been for the unexpected arrival at the trial of M. Hersant.

M. Hersant had seen an account in the Macon paper of the finding of the body of Isabelle, and wondering whether the pond in which she had been found could possibly have been the

one close to the house with the green signboard, he had visited the spot once again to make sure. Satisfied that it was the same pond and remembering his very strange experience in connection with the house, he at once resolved to attend the trial.

He was given a seat near the witness-box, and on Théophile Blot coming forward to give evidence, he noticed with a start a curious red mark on the boy's hand. He stared hard at it and perceived it was a scratch that even now looked hardly healed. He also remembered the fingers, short, stubby and singularly repulsive; they were identical with those on the hand he had seen thrust so furtively through the slightly open doorway.

Unable to restrain himself any longer, he sprang up and asked permission to give evidence. Blot was dumbfounded; he denied at first that he had been anywhere near the house at the hour M. Hersant named, but in the end he very reluctantly admitted he had been in one of the fields somewhere at the back of it with his mother. He declared the scratch on his hand had been made by a cat, and his parents and sisters corroborated him.

Despite the facts that there were bloodstains on his coat and on one of his shirts, that he had spent twenty sous on sweets the day after the disappearance of Isabelle Legrand, and that he and his parents were known to have been on extremely bad terms with the Legrands, he was very reluctantly allowed to remain free.

Trobas was acquitted, but he would very likely have been found guilty had it not been for the timely intervention of Hersant.

The White Hind Inn and the pond opposite it were for a long time after the murder of Isabelle Legrand haunted by her ghost.

A Horrible Fate

ONE beautiful September evening shortly before the Great War two men, the one elderly and the other young, were walking along the road that lies between the Point de Talbert and Grenables on the coast of Brittany.

'And you were actually with Louis, Legrand, the night he disappeared?' the younger man suddenly remarked.

'Yes,' Legrand replied. 'There were four of us—my wife, Mlle Jennier, my niece, Louis, your brother, and myself. We had been out for the day picnicking at the Point de Talbert, and we walked home together as far as the turning we are now coming to. It leads to St. Martin, where Louis was staying, and we paused there for a while to say good-bye to him. That was the last we saw of him, and apparently the last anyone ever saw of him. He disappeared as completely as if the earth had suddenly opened and swallowed him up.'

'And there were no theories as to what had become of him?'

'Oh, of course there were theories,' Legrand said slowly, 'but none of them were at all feasible. My advice to you, Hervant, is to give up all attempts at solving the mystery. It is twenty years since it happened and it is not likely that you will discover any clues now. You will gain nothing by remaining here.'

'I promised my mother that as soon as I was grown up I would try and find out what had become of Louis,' Hervant said. 'It was her dying wish, and I feel that I cannot return to Paris without making some effort, at least, to do so. What was the exact date of his disappearance?'

'September 9, 1879,' Legrand murmured.

'Then it is the anniversary tonight!' Hervant cried. 'Will you fall in with a whim of mine, Mr. Legrand?'

'It depends,' Legrand answered. 'What is your whim?'

'Oh, nothing very complicated,' Hervant said. 'Merely this.

I suggest that you should leave me at the turning we are coming to. I want to follow the route my brother took after you had left him. I feel that an idea may come to me, especially as this is, you say, the anniversary of his disappearance. Would you very much mind going on and leaving me?"

Legrand shrugged his shoulders. 'Well, of course, I would prefer to accompany you. Still, if you are bent on going alone and you think you can derive any comfort from doing so, I willingly agree.'

They had now reached the turning which, according to a signpost, led to Brulier Cove and St. Martin, and bidding one another *au revoir*, they separated, Legrand continuing along the high road to Grenables and Hervant following the route to St. Martin.

For some little distance the road Hervant took was fairly level; it then began to dip, and terminated in a very abrupt descent on to the shore of a small and prettily wooded estuary of a river, known as Brulier Cove. The spot was practically deserted; on one side of it was a long-disused and rather grim-looking quarry, and on the other a miniature pier or jetty. Only two habitations were visible, a tiny cottage that stood close to the shore and a large white house that lay nestling amid a thick cluster of trees, in the centre of the valley, some hundred yards or so from the river. Neither abode showed any signs of life, however, and the silence that greeted Hervant as, arriving at the foot of the descent he paused and looked round, was sepulchral.

Fascinated by the beauty of his surroundings and something in the atmosphere of the place that he could not exactly define, he decided to rest there for a while. Espying a large stone close beside a huge old uncovered iron buoy, he at once made for it. The stone did not afford the softest of seats, but after a good deal of fidgeting, he at length made himself tolerably comfortable and for some minutes he sat with his back propped against the buoy, buried in thought.

What could have happened to Louis, he asked himself, all those years ago? Was it possible that he had met with some

sinister end in this very valley? Perhaps he had tried to bathe and had been devoured by an octopus, one of those deadly creatures which, according to rumour, swarmed along the coast and attained truly Brobdingnagian dimensions. But in that case his clothes would have been found. What had always seemed more likely was that Louis had been murdered. The spot was unusually lonely, and Louis might easily have been attacked and disposed of without fear of interruption.

Hervant was still pondering over this and becoming more and more convinced in his mind that, if he intended to seek a clue to the mystery, he must look for it here, when he suddenly fancied he heard a curious rattling kind of noise, proceeding, so he thought, from inside the buoy.

Wondering what on earth it could be, he rose and endeavoured to climb on to the buoy to ascertain the cause of the queer sounds. He somehow missed his footing and fell backwards, striking his head. For a moment or so all was a void. After a time he glanced around him, first at the long green valley, over which the shades of night were now gathering fast, and then at the river which lay stretched before him, its calm, unruffled surface gleaming and scintillating like the scales of a goldfish in the fast fading sunlight. He seemed to have seen the place before, though where or when he could not for the life of him say.

Picking himself up, he put on his hat and, after staring about him dizzily for some seconds, was deliberating taking the road to St. Martin when he heard a scream of agony coming apparently from the direction of the white house. The sound was so totally unexpected and awful in its intensity that he came to a dead halt, his heart throbbing violently and his knees knocking together. He listened with terrible anxiety, but the sound was not repeated.

After waiting for some seconds, unable to make up his mind what to do, the sudden darkness of the night, the silence and solitude of the place, the indistinct images of the trees that appeared on every side, stretching their fantastic and yet strangely human-like arms athwart the gloom, all combined to

demoralize him and make him the victim of a thousand and one harrowing fancies. He eventually pulled himself together and decided to go to the white house and enquire if anything was the matter.

With this object in view he quitted the jetty and approached the house. There were no lights in any of the windows, and the most unearthly silence hung over everything. There was not a breath of air, not a leaf stirring.

Away up the valley, in the sloping green pasture land on either side of it, he could plainly discern the beautiful white cattle of Languedoc moving silently to and fro in the moonlight; while close at hand, in and out the dark, ghostly looking trees and bushes, great black bats wheeled and skimmed in noiseless flight. These, however, were the only signs of life. Otherwise, everything was absolutely still and motionless.

After waiting on the doorstep for some time, deliberating what to do, he at length summed up the courage to knock. There was no reply—only intense silence. After pausing for some minutes he rapped again, and this time he fancied he could detect the sound of footsteps that came stealing surreptitiously to the door and halted, as if their owner was debating what to do. Then, quite suddenly, the door opened and Hervant saw facing him a slim young girl, of extraordinary child-like beauty, holding a lighted candle high over her head.

‘Yes,’ she queried, ‘what do you want? Who are you?’

Hervant opened his mouth to speak, but a sudden faintness, due perhaps to his fall, suddenly coming over him, he staggered and was obliged to clutch hold of the trellis-work on either side of the door for support.

‘What is the matter?’ the girl cried, shrinking back and eyeing him suspiciously. ‘Is monsieur ill?’

‘No, not ill,’ Hervant stammered, ‘only a trifle giddy. I had a fall just now and knocked my head rather badly.’

‘Yes, I see,’ the girl said, lowering the candle and eyeing him intently. ‘Monsieur is bleeding a little.’

Hervant gazed at her curiously. She certainly was remarkably pretty with her great wealth of golden hair falling in rich

profusion over her neck and shoulders, and her big heavily lashed eyes that had an expression of almost baby-like innocence in their light-blue depths, but there was a mysterious something about her that puzzled him. What it was he could not say, but it was in strict harmony with the surroundings, with that big lone house lying all grim and silent there in the moonbeams; with the dark, fantastic shadows that confronted him everywhere, and to which he could see no material counterpart, and with the evening sky which had turned to a deep and solemn sea of blood-red, across which lay one lonely bar of inky cloud, strangely ominous.

And all the while he gazed at her and wondered she continued looking up at him from under her dark lashes, as if engaged in some mighty problem in which he was intimately concerned. Then her face suddenly lighted up and she said: 'Monsieur, would you like to rest? Come in and sit down while I prepare a little refreshment for you.'

Hervant was only too ready. The girl fascinated him. He found it impossible to go. He felt he must stay and see more of her. Bidding him follow her, she led the way across a vast, dimly lighted hall to a room halfway down a bare, gloomy passage.

'If monsieur will wait here,' she said, 'I will get his supper.'

'Won't you tell me what to call you?' Hervant exclaimed.

The girl hesitated for a moment and then, biting her lips, replied, 'I am Madame Bonivon.'

'What!' Hervant cried. 'You don't mean to say you are married? Why, you are but a child.'

'I am, monsieur,' Madame Bonivon laughed, and then, seeing him glance with horror at a long malignant-looking red scratch on the back of one of her pretty, slim white hands, she said hurriedly: 'I, too, have been in the wars, M. Hervant. In reaching down a picture from the wall just now, I caught my hand on a nail. It hurt horribly and I screamed. Perhaps you heard me?'

'Was that you screaming?' Hervant asked. He fancied that, as he spoke, she gave a slight start.

However, she replied quite calmly: 'Yes, I am a shocking coward. I can't stand pain. I'm afraid I made an awful noise.' She was about to say something else, when a door in the house slammed, and again he fancied that he saw her start. 'My nerves are still upset,' she remarked, 'and any . . .' She did not complete the sentence. Instead, her jaw fell and an expression of terror appeared in her face.

Following the direction of her eyes, which were almost starting out of her head, Hervant's gaze alighted on a man's mackintosh that was hanging on a hook in the passage. It was swaying to and fro, and bulging.

'That's odd,' he exclaimed. 'There wasn't a breath of air. How do you account for it?'

'The wind must have got up suddenly,' Madame Bonivon murmured, her teeth chattering. 'Ah, I remember now, I left the kitchen door open when I let you in. Then, forcing herself to appear calm, 'Will you remain here, monsieur, while I get some supper?' She left him.

He heard her go upstairs. Presently she called out, 'Will monsieur come up here and wash his hands before eating?'

As he hastened along the stone passage to the hall, a chill and melancholy wind, seeming to rise from heaven alone knew where, swept past him, moaning and sighing like a lost soul, while from without came the ominous hooting of a night bird. Apart from these sounds the house was silent as the grave, and Hervant felt that he and the girl were the only living souls in it.

On the first floor he was met by Madame Bonivon, who to his surprise was now attired in a charming outdoor costume. She escorted him to a room where the remains of a wood fire flickered faintly on the hearth and, halting in the doorway, she bid him enter.

'If monsieur does not mind waiting here in the dark for a few seconds,' she said, 'I will bring a light.'

Hervant at once crossed the threshold and was groping his way forward when he received a violent push, which precipitated him halfway across the floor. Before he could recover his

equilibrium the door behind slammed to violently, a key clicked in the lock, and he realized that he was a prisoner.

At that instant, the fire, bursting out into a flame, illuminated the whole apartment with a ruddy glow, and he perceived to his astonishment the figure of a man, with what looked like a red handkerchief wrapped round his head, sitting in a curious huddled-up position in front of the hearth. He thought at first the man was asleep but, on approaching him nearer, he saw to his horror that what he had taken for a handkerchief was a big gaping wound, and that the man was dead, literally hacked to pieces.

The shock occasioned by this spectacle was so great that Hervant all but fainted, and for a long while he stood in a kind of stupor, bereft of all thought and action. He was still in this condition when he suddenly heard a loud clattering of feet, accompanied by a babel of voices, and as the sounds rapidly drew nearer he speedily became conscious that a number of people were ascending the stairs.

He then heard a voice, which he at once recognized as that of Madame Bonivon, cry out: 'The murderer is up here in the room with my poor butchered husband. I caught him in the very act, redhanded, and locked him in. Don't be afraid. Come on, he can't escape, there are too many of us.'

The frightful truth then flashed across Hervant's mind. He had fallen a victim to the most terrible plot imaginable. The beautiful, child-like woman with the innocent eyes was accusing him of a crime that she had probably committed herself. He understood now the full significance of that dreadful scream and the ugly, raw-looking scratch on her hand. Also he could now quite easily account for the strange silence of the house, the horrible, sinister atmosphere that seemed to hang over it, and the woman's odd behaviour all along. A bigger devil than Madame Bonivon he could not conceive.

But what in the name of heaven was he to do! She was even now urging a party of people to apprehend him. It would, of course, be only her word against his, yet how in the world could he explain his presence in the house?

Yielding to a sudden ungovernable panic, he rushed madly to the window and, throwing it open, leaped out into the moonlight. The floor he had been on was no very great distance from the ground, and as he had had the good fortune to alight on a bush, which to a very large extent broke his fall, he was not really hurt. Quickly picking himself up, he at once made for the river.

He was halfway down it when loud cries from the rear told him that he was being pursued. On and on he ran, till at last he reached the jetty. Running to the far side of the old buoy, which hid him from the sight of his pursuers, he threw an armful of crab-pots into the sea, to make a loud splash. Having done that he swarmed up the side of the buoy and dropped inside it. A few seconds later his followers stood on the jetty, hot and perspiring.

‘Confound it!’ they cried. ‘We are too late; he has jumped into the sea. Didn’t you hear the splash? He is now, in all probability, being eaten by an octopus.’

None of them thought of looking inside the buoy. After standing talking for some minutes they at length moved away and their voices grew fainter and fainter, till they eventually ceased.

Hervant, who all this time had been crouching on his hands and feet, quivering with excitement, now stood upright and took stock of his hiding-place. The walls of the buoy were about nine feet high. Through the circular aperture above him he could see the big white moon shining in all its calm, majestic splendour, and he saw with dismay that the sides of the buoy were absolutely bare and devoid of any foothold. Again and again he tried to climb to the opening, but all to no purpose, and he became at last so weary that he was forced to desist.

Realizing now that he was caught like a rat in a trap, he sat down and abandoned himself to utter despair. He continued in this state of mind for hours, until, in fact, the heavens paled and the dawn broke, then, tired out, he closed his eyes and fell into a deep sleep.

He awoke to find himself in utter darkness, with a deafening

sound of hammering in his ears. For some minutes he failed to realize what was happening, and then suddenly the truth dawned on him. Workmen had put on the cap or top of the buoy and were now hammering it down in its place. The horror of the situation came home to him at once. Unless he could make them hear him, he would be entombed alive in this iron box, which grew more and more close and stuffy each second, and he would linger on till hunger and thirst and suffocation eventually put an end to his misery. Even the guillotine was preferable to this.

He opened his mouth to shout, but the sound died away in his throat. He tried to pound on the iron walls of his prison, but his hands and feet refused to act, and all the while the din waxed more and more furious and the huge, heavy iron covering sank deeper and deeper into its groove. By and by the hammering ceased. Then there was a terrible nauseating smell of hot iron and paint, then a blank, and then the buoy began to move. Hervant's mental sufferings had now reached their limit. He was conscious of a sensation of sudden rising, as if the buoy was being raised high in the air by a giant crane, and then of being lowered, down, down, down. A frightful feeling of sickness gradually stole over him, and he knew no more.

On recovering consciousness he again heard the sound of hammering and voices. It was light, and he was lying on his back in the open.

'Monsieur,' a voice exclaimed in his ears, 'you have slept well. That comes of having a sound conscience and a good digestion. It is eight o'clock.'

Hervant sat up and looked around. He was on the jetty, and close behind him was the old rusty, iron buoy, which several men in blue blouses were demolishing.

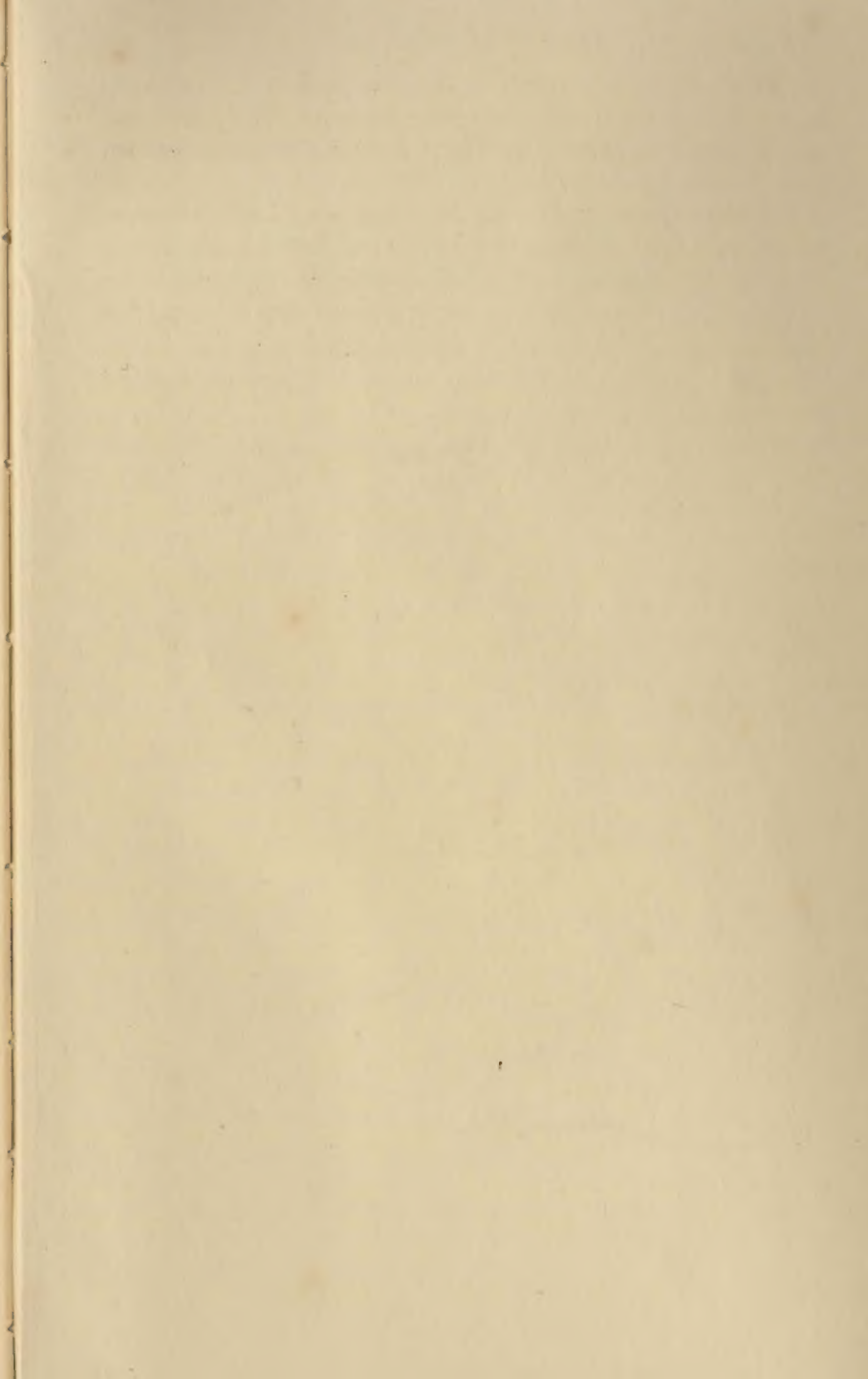
Gradually everything came back to him; the walk with M. Legrand, their parting, his strolling on to the jetty, the curious rattling noise inside the buoy, his fall and subsequent ghastly adventures. He was still asking himself whether they had been merely a dream, when one of the workmen uttered a loud exclamation.

'Mercy on us!' he cried. 'A skeleton! A skeleton inside the buoy! Why, it must have been here for years. You have lived here all your life, Jacques, how long is it since the buoy was put to sea?'

'Twenty years today,' the old man who had spoken to Hervant replied. 'I always remember the date because it was on that very morning that the murder up at the white house took place, and there was such a hue and cry after the supposed murderer. He disappeared off the end of the jetty and we all thought that he had jumped into the river. It would indeed be odd if this were he. What a fate!'

'What a fate, indeed,' Hervant said, with a shudder. 'Poor, poor Louis.'¹

¹ All names in this story are fictitious.



Three more books by
'Britain's No. 1 Ghost Hunter'
ELLIOTT O'DONNELL

DANGEROUS GHOSTS HAUNTED BRITAIN

Each 15s net

PHANTOMS OF THE NIGHT

16s net

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

STRANGEST OF ALL

Frank Edwards

The author, one of America's leading newspapermen, has always been intrigued by the mysterious and the unexplained. This book represents the winnowing of a monumental collection of strange tales.

15s net

RIDER